Film Quarterly

SCHLÖNDORFF'S *TIN DRUM*

THE EMPIRE'S NEW CLOTHES

FILM NIGHTMARES:
PSYCHOANALYZING HORROR FILMS

BERGMAN'S *MARIONETTES*

SPRING 1981

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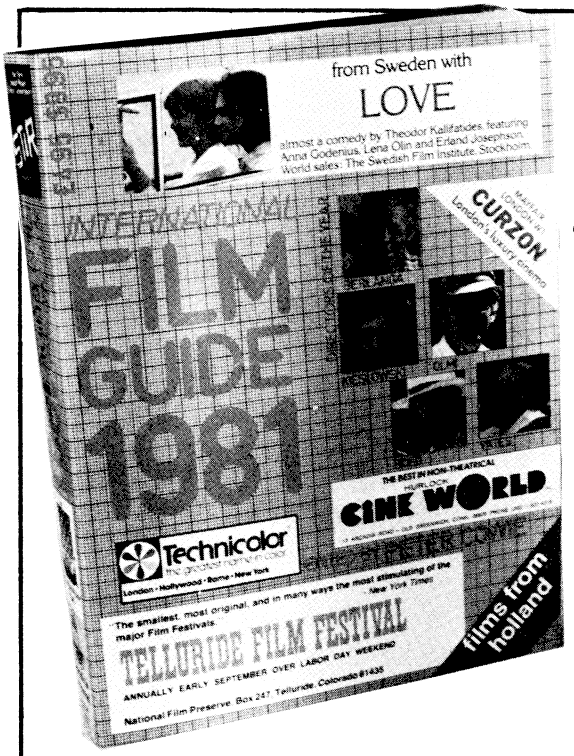

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HUGH GRAY: IN MEMORIAM

Hugh Gray was that increasingly rare kind of American film person who bridged the unfortunate abyss between the universities and the industry. Irish by origins, classically educated in Britain and Belgium, he turned up in Hollywood. There he worked as a screenwriter, and taught screenwriting and history at UCLA. He had known Grierson, and Hitchcock, and Renoir. From the inception of *Film Quarterly* until travelling to our meetings became too much for him, he was a mainstay of our editorial board. Whether regaling us with the Aristotelian ramifications of some dramatic concept, or stringing together a brilliantly outrageous series of multilingual puns, he was an infinite delight. Sometimes, too, he was a check on our youthful exuberance; once, when I had challenged his high opinion of a manuscript, wondering whether its historical perspective was sufficiently acute, he clapped me on the knee and said fiercely, "Damn it, boy, I *am* film history!"

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ciated with the vagina; its legs are sometimes glossed as the fantasized penis that the mother is believed to possess. Some references concerning spider imagery include: Karl Abraham, "The Spider as a Dream Symbol" in *Selected Papers*, trans. Douglas Bryand and Alix Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1927); Ralph Little, "Oral Aggression in Spider Legends," *Amer. Imago* 23: 169-180, 1966; R. Little, "Umbilical Cord Symbolism of the Spider's Dropline," *Psychoanal. Quart.*; Richard Sterba, "On spiders, hanging and oral sadism," *Amer. Imago* 7: 21-28. There is also an influential reading of "Little Miss Muffet. . . ." in Ella Freeman Sharpe, "Cautionary Tales," *Int'nat. J. of Psychoanal.* 24: 41-45. In the preceding text I have also connected spiders to masturbation. I have done this not simply because spiders somewhat resemble hands but because that resemblance itself is part of our literary culture. Recall the legend of Arachne who was punished by Minerva by being reduced to a hand which becomes a spider. Bulfinch writes that Minerva sprinkled Arachne "with the juices of aconite, and immediately her hair came off and ears likewise. Her form shrank up, and her head grew smaller yet; her fingers cleaved to her side and served for legs. All the rest of her is body, out of which she spins her thread, often hanging suspended from it, in the same attitude as when Minerva touched her and transformed her into a spider." Thomas Bulfinch, *Mythology* (N.Y.: Dell Publishing Co., 1959), 93.

19. Some typical science fiction plots are outlined in the opening of Susan Sontag's "The Imagination of Disaster" in *Film Theory and Criticism* (N.Y.: Oxford U. Press, 1979). Sontag's first model plot is like the Discovery Plot described in this paper. However, the problem with Sontag's variant is that she does not give enough emphasis to the drama of proving the existence of the monster over skeptical objections. This, I feel, is the crux of most horror/sci-fi films of the Discovery Plot variety.

20. The theme of knowing/not knowing is important to horror films along many different dimensions. In terms of cinematic technique, it can influence the director's choice of formal strategies. For example, in recent horror films, there is a great deal of use of what I call unassigned camera movement in the context of stories about demons, ghosts and other unseen but all-seeing monsters. In *The Changeling*, the camera begins to move around George C. Scott in his study. It is not supplying new narrative information nor is its movement explicitly correlated within the scene to any specific character. It has no assignment either in terms of narrative or characterological function. But it does call attention to itself. The audience sees it. And the audience cannot help postulating that the camera movement *might* represent the presence of some unseen, supernatural force that is observing Scott for devilish purposes. The point of the camera movement is to provoke the spectator into a state of uncertainty in which he/she shifts between knowing and not knowing.

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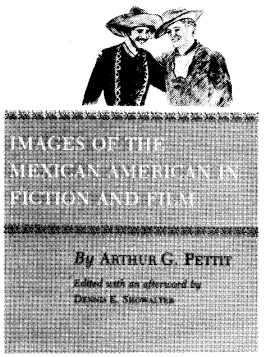

Images of the Mexican American in Fiction and Film

***By* ARTHUR G. PETTIT**
***Edited with an afterword by* DENNIS E. SHOWALTER**

From the beginnings of Anglo-Mexican interaction, Anglos have felt physical, cultural, and moral superiority. Pettit says shifts in these attitudes have meant only variations in the use of stereotypes.

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JOHN HUGHES

The Tin Drum: Volker Schlöndorff's "Dream of Childhood"

The idea for these interviews grew out of a meeting with Schlöndorff shortly after his film shared the Golden Palm with *Apocalypse Now* at Cannes. He is a shy and reserved person—though the reserve conceals an almost Prussian tenacity—and the fact that we were invited to lunch by a mutual close friend gave me the chance to get an unusually revealing glimpse of Schlöndorff's mind and imagination. The mind is unexpectedly subtle and philosophical: while a student, Schlöndorff won a nation-wide French lycée award for an essay on Descartes (which may be why the "pagan-Catholic" Günter Grass refers to Schlöndorff as a "cartesian Protestant"). The imagination flashes in many directions at once: literary, political, psychological, cinematic. During that first conversation, as I remember it, there were two words which seemed touchstones for him: "humane" and "dialectical." It is, perhaps, the unusual ability to combine humane sympathy with an awareness of dialectical perspectives that gives *The Tin Drum* a special power. This is especially obvious in Schlöndorff's complex grappling with the nature of the novel's deformed boy-hero, Oskar Matzerath—a central concern in the interviews which follow. To see the film as "literary" or "anti-formalist" or "mainstream"—as many have done—is to miss the point of Schlöndorff's prolonged and fruitful wrestling with his literary Angel, Günter Grass. Unlike Coppola, he did not project himself—or history—onto a series of literary metaphors. He discovered the meaning of these metaphors—and particularly of Oskar—within his own personality and subconscious. Having discovered a less pernicious and more benign Oskar within himself, he reversed the dialectic and saw Oskar in a historical light. He knew that, for Grass, Oskar represented the destructive infantilism of the Nazis as well as the "scepticism" of the fifties generation. For Schlöndorff, finally coming to terms with the 1959 epic in the late seventies, Oskar also represented the most vitriolic and rage-ridden currents of the post-1968 protest movements. Schlöndorff understood that Oskar could represent all of these things only if the demonic excesses of the Grass novel were curbed. Oskar *had* to embody a certain heroism: for he is somehow aware that the milk of human kindness is the only buffer against the psychotic potential of frustration and rage. This realization was paralleled, on a number of stylistic levels, by Schlöndorff's desire to move away from the occasionally mechanistic cerebrality of his earlier work. In order to probe the "irrational outbursts" of the thirties, he had to reach into irrational layers within both himself and the cinema. The necessary form for this turbulent content became the traditional German realism that Schlöndorff had long admired: the earthy, precise yet fantastical, populist yet mystical, quintessentially German style of Brueghel, *Faust*, Max Beckmann, Fritz Lang, Pabst, and many others. An attempt to forge a link between reality and fantasy, the style of Schlöndorff's film is also a tribute to his first master, the Jean Renoir whose "poetic realism" Schlöndorff discovered during the early part of his scholarly exile in France.

VOLKER SCHLÖNDORFF

HUGHES: *Are there any roots of* The Tin Drum *in your early experience in Germany during the war?*

SCHLÖNDORF: That's difficult to answer. I was born in 1939 in Wiesbaden. My mother was killed during a bombing raid in '43 or '44. My father, a doctor, didn't fight in the war. A World War I veteran, he was too old for military service. I don't have many memories from the Nazi era, except for the swastika flags flapping on the streets. And

also a vague sense of horror. There is one memory, of three men hanged on a gymnastic bar in a schoolyard behind our house. This schoolyard was a Gestapo headquarters during the last days of the war. But I saw this from a distance, from the balcony outside our apartment. In fact, I can't remember if I *really* saw it or was just told about it . . .

I also remember, at around eight or ten, a kind of mass guilt tendency—we were all accusing our fathers and asking them how the Hitler thing could have happened, what they were doing during the war, etc. And of course none of them admitted any responsibility. It was always somebody else who had been the evil one. The schools added to this confusion by teaching us about the war in a dry, statistical manner. All you had to know was that a nasty Santa Claus, Hitler, had seduced everyone into doing horrible things. The emphasis was on rebuilding the country, for which moral scrutiny was definitely not a necessity. That was the spirit of the fifties. So that is why the view of Nazism as a sinister populist phenomenon in the Grass novel seemed to me an important theme. Which is diametrically opposed to the diabolical cosmos of Syberberg, of course . . .

What was your reaction to the Grass novel when it was published in the late fifties?

I wasn't at all interested and didn't read it. At that time I was living in France. My main goal, apart from the cinema, was to forget that I was German. Even at fifteen I had decided to be a film director. That came out of my early fantasies of being a circus performer. There was also the postwar atmosphere. Wiesbaden was like an American colony. I remember the black American soldiers who gave me pieces of chocolate and taught me my first English words. I soon learned English and began seeing a lot of foreign films—German films were not being shown. My first favorites were *Rear Window, Odd Man Out,* and *On the Waterfront.* The last influenced me the most. It seemed to bring out some innate tendency to be outraged by injustice. I was carrying around a Budd Schulberg novel, *The Disenchanted,* like some kind of sacred text.

Anyhow, in order to cure me of my artistic tendencies my good Protestant father sent me to a Catholic lycée in France. I was a good student but I remained a devoted cinéphile. Fortunately, the priests at the lycée encouraged me to attend the Cinémathèque. Soon afterwards—this was in

The Germans arrest Oskar's mother's lover

the mid-fifties—I was living in Paris and working at the Cinémathèque in order to see films free. I had enrolled at another lycée which, as I was to discover 25 years later, was located in the exact same district of Paris where Günter Grass was furiously completing the final draft of *The Tin Drum!* Later on, I remember hearing about the controversy generated by the novel's appearance. There were right-wing and Catholic groups demonstrating against it. But all of that seemed very far away. After all, I was living out my dream in Paris —sitting in on the birth of the New Wave and discovering that there was once such a thing as German cinema . . .

How did your discovery of German cinema take place?

The most powerful memory for me is my first meeting with Fritz Lang. I was working at the Cinémathèque as a voice-over translator of German subtitles. Lang showed up for a screening, and I went over to ask him to autograph a book about his films. The book fell open to a page with a photo of Peter Lorre in *M,* which Lang autographed . . . At the time, I was beginning to get powerfully involved in the movies of Lang and Pabst, which is why this meeting with Lang captured my imagination. But it took a while for the Lang-Pabst influence to take hold. For a long time, my major frame of reference was French. I began to get jobs as an assistant to French directors. I met a lot of them in the Cinémathèque—as you know, Truffaut and many others could be seen there almost every day. Louis Malle's *Zazie* was the first film I worked on. Twenty years afterward, I showed up with my dwarfs to shoot that scene in front of the Eiffel Tower from *The Tin Drum,* and the whole scene became a tribute to Zazie and the Tower in Malle's film . . . Then I worked on a few of Jean-Pierre Melville's films—he was really the father-figure for that French generation. Eventually my French daydream ended —as it had to. I remember a rude awakening that came in 1965. I discovered that my French friends looked upon me as an archetypal German. Me, who had tried to totally efface my Germanness! If I showed up early for an appointment, they would say, "There's a perfect German for you—always on time . . ." So I decided to return to Germany and discover what it really meant to be German. I went to Munich with a script based on Musil and met Werner Herzog, who advised me on how to shoot it. That's how it all began . . .

And then it took another fifteen years for you to take on Grass and The Tin Drum . . .

You know, it's no accident that I did that Descartes essay. I'm a kind of traditional European rationalist. I see things in terms of the traditional European rational categories: historical, aesthetic, political, etc. That was why I was so fascinated by *Apocalypse Now* when I competed against it at Cannes. Although obviously confused and out of focus, the story goes from one extreme to the other in a way that is totally non-European. It's that American fusion of mythic vitality combined with a computer personality—the technocratic ethos gone mad. Which fascinates an old-fashioned rationalist like myself.

So you can image how frightened I was when I first had to come to terms with the vitality of Günter Grass. I was more at home with purely intellectual things like Musil's writings. So I had to stop being the civilized and respectable person I had become in France. To grapple with Grass, I had to become spontaneous and go back to the child. Then I realized that I was recovering the original energy that made me want to go into the circus and the cinema when I was a little boy. Which had nothing to do with saving humanity or things like that—it was for the showmanship of it. I had never dared to live out my fantasies in any film before *The Tin Drum.* After all, it's much safer to stick to ideas. But now I had to go into the unconscious and the spontaneous levels. I didn't really know what was happening until we got David Bennent for the role of Oscar. He blended into the role so perfectly—in an almost terrifying way. I just let him do all of the things I never dared to do as a kid.

Fortunately, Grass had more confidence in me than I had in myself. He would encourage me to do things I didn't know I could do. After all, he's an artist, very naive in a way . . . He encouraged me to find my own frame of reference.

What did this frame of reference involve?

I'll go back to the beginning. Franz Seitz, the producer, was passionate about filming the novel. This had seemed to be a doomed idea. Many projects had fallen by the wayside. Even directors like

Wajda and Fellini—who, by the way, is very influenced by Grass, as you can see from the fish at the end of *La Dolce Vita*—hadn't been able to tie all the loose ends together. Then Seitz wrote a treatment that Grass liked, and he finally gave his long-withheld permission. As I said, I was at first knocked over by the turbulent, epic scope of the book.

Then I began to connect Grass to the realist tradition of Pabst and Lang. Grass may be allegorical and mythic, but he is always obsessed with facts, he's always an excellent observer. I like to contrast Grass and Syberberg. Syberberg is completely mythic and abstract. This is, of course, the polarity in German films: the Expressionist, with its interest in hazy generalities, and the precise viewpoints of the Realists like Pabst and Lang. Grass starts from precise childhood memories of a small town on the Baltic, of a family of shopkeepers. He shows how everything that happened had roots in the way these people lived. While Syberberg places the responsibility on Machiavellian, demonic minds which abused an innocent population, Grass shows Nazism deriving from the banality of middle-class life aspiring to become something else. For Grass, these people aren't very innocent. They wanted to feel important, to feel like generals in control of history. And this is a very dangerous energy because it has a certain legitimacy. That's what fascism is built on: *making everybody in the street feel important.* And of course these people are infantile in a far more dangerous way than Oskar in the novel. After all, it's infantile to believe in the illusion that the man in the street can run the world. They claimed to be controlling history while in reality they left all decisions in the hands of their Leader. Which is the most infantile of traits—even children don't like their parents to make all the decisions for them. This kind of thing is handled brilliantly by Fellini in *Amarcord.* Fellini shows the way the adolescent dependencies of Italian men provided fuel for the growth of fascism.

How did you come to terms with the infantile nature of Oskar?

That was what first hooked me into the book. Even before I started working with Jean-Claude Carrière, long before we came up with the idea of making Oskar like a Chaplin character, I was

Oskar clings to his infernal instrument . . .

especially interested in the character of the boy. Far more than the historical background. Finally, inevitably, I began to see Oskar as a very wide-ranging metaphor. I saw him as a prophetic image of the entire post-1968 youth. His most important trait is his regressive attitude towards women. He wants to be everything with a woman, to be a lover, to be coddled like a baby, to dominate—only he cannot accept the grown-up male's responsibility towards women. This kind of attitude was prevalent in the thirties and is also widespread in the modern world. Oskar is obviously an ancestor of the post-'68 drop-out generation. The screaming of protests combined with the refusal to provide a realistic framework for change . . .

Nevertheless, I did identify with this monster in the most intense way. I was aware of the fact that Oskar was anathema to the puritan mind—a dwarflike, immoral, abnormal child. I was convinced that I had to show how very *normal* he is—neither good nor bad, and certainly not more monstrous than the so-called normal people around him. I didn't want to emphasize his abnormality. I wanted to show the monstrous things hiding inside "normal" ones. The things that he lets out, that he has not forgotten . . . In a sense, I discovered the reality of Oskar by becoming aware of my own dream-life. As I explained, Günter Grass encouraged me to get involved in this way. We both decided that the film should make the monstrous and irrational aspects of reality seem commonplace and not exotic.

You can see similar themes in other directors of the German New Wave: Herzog's dwarfs and Fassbinder's freaks, for example.

Herzog's dwarfs are far removed from what I

was trying to do. Herzog does try to show the common humanity that can be found amidst dwarfs—but it's a long way from Oskar, at least for me. As for Fassbinder, it seems to me that his approach is very limited. I, for one, could never throw out the window all of my experience and education in order to act "spontaneous" like Fassbinder. Like the films of Visconti, my aim is to bring together all of my knowledge and background into a certain form, a carefully shaped matrix. I try to dominate all of the elements whose contradictions I'm perfectly aware of. There are certain elements in Fassbinder that I like, such as the greedy lust for life that many of his characters display. But his melodramatic approach to stories is remote from my realist, observing attitude. It's really quite difficult to give credence to the action in a Fassbinder film. He's really very unimaginative. The excessive melodrama tries to conceal the failure of imagination. *Maria Braun* is more like *Tosca* than anything cinematic—it might be easier to swallow if you saw it in an opera house. Everything in *Maria Braun* is hard to believe—that scene in the train, for example.

How do you think Herzog and Fassbinder would answer your comparisons?

They are such egomaniacs that they would have no interest in comparing themselves to me or anyone else!

So you are really closer to the Old German Cinema than to the New German Cinema?

For me, Fritz Lang is the inevitable and continuing jumping-off point. His expressionistic, stylized images of concrete things. His merciless view of power relationships. His firm determination not to believe in true feeling. His refusal to allow spontaneity as the motive force of action . . . Of course, I don't think much of these things when I'm working—not since my first film. At this point I'm far more interested in what's happening in the world than in the realm of screen events.

I was fascinated to discover in both Lang and Grass the same kind of inexorable fatality. In both, there's a peasant-like, rueful sense of the unpredictable, yet cyclical, course of war, nature, history. It all goes back to the peasant in his fields looking up at the sky, and only knowing that he cannot know how nature will deal with his efforts. It's what the grandmother represents at the end of the film: despite the wheel of history, despite the waves of Russian and Swedish and Polish conquerors that have swept over her Kashubian fields, she still remains there amidst her potato crop. For me, this grandmother is a total life principle. That's why I removed the "Black Witch" references at the end of the novel. Grass thinks this was because I am Protestant while he is Catholic, but it's more than that. I cannot follow Grass in his fear of the Black Witch. The grandmother was a woman I could love more than fear. She is opposed to the other extreme, Oskar, the child-man who is a perfect portrait of human regression.

That is almost reminiscent of some classic heavyweights: the "Mothers" in Faust *and the Slavic earth-principle in* Karamazov. *Do those ring any kind of a bell?*

Yes, it's there in the film. I told Maurice Jarre that I wanted to hear the earthmother-principle in the music—so you can hear it as well as see it. But you shouldn't talk about this kind of thing to the Germans. Then they want to conquer Eastern Europe!

Some people felt that there wasn't enough of this in the film: that I left out too much of Grass's Kashubian-peasant atmosphere. But it's there if you look for it. For example, the people who are seen eating during the mother's funeral scene are the members of the Kashubian side of the Grass family. We were shooting in Poland, near Danzig, and I asked Grass to invite his relatives to take part. After I saw these people I decided to model the shots after Brueghel's paintings of peasants. After meeting these people, I had a better understanding of Grass's exuberant style. During the meal, they were drinking bottles of 97% peasant schnapps. The old woman who came with them was gulping this stuff as if it were water. I tried some of it and almost vomited—it was that strong.

I also tried to capture that "once upon a time" simplicity of the fairy tale and folk ballad traditions. Grass, of course, continually uses this kind of thing in the novel. That's the tone of the shots at the beginning: there was once a peasant woman sitting on her four skirts in the middle of a potato field; then someone came running . . . I was also influenced by Bruno Bettelheim's analysis of the

German fairy-tale tradition. The whole problem of *why* children need to relate to the cruel aspects of such stories as you find in Grimm and elsewhere.

You talked about Oskar's destructive behavior as a metaphor for a certain side of the post-'68 counterculture. Does that apply to the German terrorists—the Baader-Meinhof Group?

Oskar is not really a terrorist. And it's a fact that the Baader-Meinhof people did not start out to become terrorists. They ended up as *enfants terrible* for the Germans, but they started out from very moral, almost religious origins.

Grass intended Oskar as a portrait of the "sceptical generation" of the fifties. It was a generation without any real sense of political involvement. Even the most marginal of the post-'68 drop-outs represented some form of protest. The film attempts to give a new life to the novel by bringing Oskar up to date. The best analysis of the film's treatment of Oskar was given by Ludwig Marcuse. After the film came out in Germany, Marcuse happened to be in Munich. It was two weeks before he died. We had dinner at a restaurant at a lake outside Munich. "This is the first film I wanted to see in a long time," Marcuse said, "and I am very glad I saw it. The reason the film is an international hit is the character of Oskar. You have taken a very contemporary type and have inserted him into the Nazi era. The film works on both levels simultaneously: that explains its appeal . . ." Then Marcuse encouraged me to film the second half of the novel, the parts Carrière and I left out. And I do take this last testament of Marcuse seriously—I would like to film the second half someday.

Grass is definitely in favor of seeing Oskar's infantile destructiveness as related to Baader. But I don't agree. Of course, Oskar breaks glass because he wants to destroy valuable things. In this sense he is like Baader. Baader's first action was the firebombing in a Frankfurt department store in the mid-sixties. It was an idealistic protest against consumer society. The political amnesty granted by Brandt in 1968 applied to everyone except Baader. There was a certain minister under Brandt who could not forgive Baader for the firebombing. So he was ostracized in a totally unnecessary way. Baader never saw destruction as an end in itself—it was a signal, a way to attract attention. Oskar, on the other hand, enjoys destruction for the pure childish joy of destroying objects. I guess you could see this as more spontaneous and less dangerous. It is probably more dangerous to destroy things to attract attention than for the pure fun involved. I'm not a moralist when it comes to facing this issue. The Baader-Meinhof Group's destructiveness, on the other hand, was far less pernicious than the police reactions, as I tried to show in *Katherina Blum*. My support of the terrorists' lawyers was a response to this. That support got me branded as a terrorist sympathizer by the police (who searched my house), by the right-wing Springer press, and by a segment of the Social Democrats.

How about the scene in the tower—where Oskar breaks all of the glass windows in order to attract the attention of his mother, who's in a nearby hotel room with her lover?

Oskar has temporarily lost his mother, so he feels like destroying everything. But I don't think he imagines that his mother will halt her tryst to look out the window when she hears his screams. He turns his anger against the world as a whole since he can't turn against his mother—she's too close and too huge for him. His personal anger is transformed into a larger context. The Baader-Meinhof Group, contrastingly, didn't want to draw attention to themselves, but to notions about the state of Germany and the world. So the Oskar-Baader connection is definitely a problematic one. Oskar is angry because he's unwilling to lose his mother or to share her with anyone. At the Nazi rally, he's not protesting against Hitler. He simply wants to be the center of attention. It's a very childish protest. He's angry that *someone else* is on the platform, for he's anxious to exercise *his own* power. Of course he does hate the artifice—the music and the uniforms and the Nazi flags and the platform—for he has seen the pile of dogshit hidden beneath the platform! But his tin drum is not a specific symbol—it's an object. You might see it as the writing machine the famous author is tapping on. Or as a form of energy. Or as an evocation of political protest, or of particular movements. But you can't limit its meaning. After all, in the thirties Hitler was called "the drummer." But the Communists were referred to in a similar fashion. And then there was that heroic drummer-

martyr in Brecht's *Mother Courage*. In the end, however, it's just a drum. Just another object—like the eels and mushrooms that are always popping out of Grass's imagination. You can't reduce these physical things to a single meaning.

Is there some direct link to Mother Courage *in your film?*

Brecht was my key to the meaning of German history until the late Valeska Gert, whose sensual acting and dancing have influenced me greatly, compared him to Shakespeare. She said that Brecht was like a square block of wood, while Shakespeare was both round and full of angles. From Brecht we learned that it is necessary to start from facts instead of ideas. But reality cannot be depicted truthfully without poetry. And I hope there is a certain poetry conveyed by Oskar's desire to hold on to his dream of childhood in the face of the deadly order and symmetry of the Nazis. *The Tin Drum* demonstrates that imagination is a part of reality. I wanted to show that the cinema must always be both realistic *and* dreamlike. Realism in the cinema is what makes one dream.*

JEAN-CLAUDE CARRIÈRE

Schlöndorff mentioned that you became involved at a very early stage . . .

Yes, very early. He was still trying to get a grip on the book. We've known each other for a long time, and he came to see me in Paris one day. He came right out with it: "Would you like to write a script based on *The Tin Drum*?" I hadn't read the book in almost twenty years—it had been published in Paris in 1960—but I still had a powerful impression of Grass's achievement. So I immediately said yes. I remembered how Grass's voice, that sweetly strong voice that seemed to be shedding a definitive light on the Nazi era, had overwhelmed me at the time. So we plunged right into the project. We started talking about the central problem: what kind of actor would be right for the role of Oskar? The experience of Wajda was a warning for us. Wajda had planned a film on the book—which, after all, takes place in his native Poland. But the project hadn't gotten past the planning stage. We knew that Wajda had spent a lot of time looking for a dwarf to play the part of Oskar. Volker seemed to be following in the footsteps of Wajda. But I told him at our very first meeting that he should forget about his search for the ideal dwarf. I had this intuition that Oskar had to convey a childlike quality that could not be found in a dwarf.

Schlöndorff also mentioned some kind of Chaplin influence. What was that all about?

That was the crucial insight that came to me during that first meeting with Volker. Perhaps not so much an insight as an association: I suddenly thought of Chaplin's *The Kid*. That dreamy, sweet quality of Jackie Coogan was exactly what could make a cinematic character out of Oskar. This was one of those "ah-ha" experiences for the both of us. You don't know why it fits, but there's no doubt in your mind. We suddenly knew that, thanks to Chaplin, we were going to make this film. That the film was possible—technically possible.

But Schlöndorff had already agreed to make the film, hadn't he?

At first when he spoke to Seitz, the producer, his answer was no. He thought that it would be too difficult. But then he went home and began to think about it. For some time Schlöndorff had the idea of making a "barbaric" film: a mixture of strict realism and fantasy. I think he became especially caught up in the scenes in the book where Oscar breaks the glass. These scenes had something of traditional German realism in them, while they also represented the middle-class world of ordinary Nazism which was exploding before the glance of this strange child. There was what they call a "black light" in scenes like that. Schlöndorff also began to get interested in the child's refusal to grow up because of the sinister forces which he senses are gathering about him. By the time of our first meeting, he had agreed to do it. But this problem of a dwarf actor had undermined his confidence. Then, thanks to Chaplin, he got this new vision. Then he was fortunate enough to find David Bennent.

Where did he find Bennent?

*For the opportunity to conduct this interview, as well as for a few important questions, thanks are due to Ken Emerson of *The New York Times Magazine*.)

He found him in the midst of the Oktoberfest in Munich. Actually, David was right under his nose—the son of his friend, the actor Heinz Bennent—but Volker didn't know that. He went at it from another direction. He began asking Munich doctors if they knew any children with underdeveloped bodies and overdeveloped intellects. One doctor gave him the Bennents' address, and Volker set up an appointment with them. It was during the Oktoberfest, and the streets were full of people in costume. In front of the Bennent house, as Volker was crossing the street, there was this strange little blond boy with enormous eyes watching him. Volker knew right away that it was David, and that he would make a perfect Oskar. And in fact he was more than perfect. Volker came to see David as a kind of medium. It sometimes seemed that he was directing some of the scenes in an almost telepathic way. He had encouraged his parents to read the entire book to him several times, so he always knew what was going on. And it was very important for us that he was bilingual so that he could perform both my French version and Volker's German translation of the script.

When did you decide to cut out the final third of the novel?

That was also a very early decision. After our second or third meeting I had convinced Volker that the final part, which extends from 1945 to 1959, would have to go. Otherwise, since Oskar grows up physically during that part of the book, another actor would have had to replace David. That would have destroyed the unity of the thing. Our next step was to make a rather determined effort to convince Grass. That wasn't too difficult, since Grass was intelligent enough to see the inevitability of the cut. Then we made some other cuts—things that were not germane to the development of Oskar's character. Then we had to write a lot of dialogue, since Oskar's narration allows for little of this in the book. We wrote the dialogue in French, and Volker immediately translated it into German. Certain characters were reshaped—such as the grandmother, and the Jewish toy merchant. Charles Aznavour took the latter role even further than we had planned—for example, the kaddish which the merchant recites at the funeral is Aznavour's idea. Aznavour is Armenian, of course, but he identified with Markus so much

Oskar's mother in Marcus's shop

that the idea of the kaddish suddenly came to him. Another sudden inspiration was our decision to put the old peasant woman at the end of the film. She's not the same woman as at the beginning of the film. She's just some other peasant woman picking potatoes in a lonely field. We wanted to round it off, to end it as it began.

There were many other subtle changes. We wanted to find ways to preserve the mysterious symbols in the book. For example, the fish with which Oskar's mother, Agnes, stuffs herself to death. These fish have some hidden meaning in the unconscious of Günter Grass, but that wasn't what concerned us. We simply wanted to make the scene believable. The first thing was to delineate the isolation of her existence, which is emphasized in the scene where the lover has to come into the room to masturbate her. When she comes back to the dinner table and her husband, and begins to stuff herself with fish, you sense that a drastic change has taken place inside her. Then we had to decide how she would eat the fish, what kind of fish she would eat, what kind of lighting would be on her—I try to be very precise about these things in my scripts. We also decided to have her die alone in the bathroom, instead of in the hospital as occurs in the book.

The scene reminds me of a Beckmann painting . . .

At first that kind of garish Germanic atmosphere was new for me. But I had a little bit of preparation for it. When working with Buñuel on one of his scripts I would often talk with him about the German directors of the twenties and thirties whom he loves more than anyone else: Lang, Mur-

nau, Von Sternberg and others. When Buñuel was a student in Paris he would go to see German films all of the time, and he still talks about them a lot. So that helped a lot. Then, when we were preparing to do the script, we began looking at old newspapers from both Danzig and Germany during the war years, as well as documents and photographs. This was a very precious experience for us. It enabled us to reconstruct the whole period, and to understand the kinds of people we were dealing with. It was great to see these old photographs of weddings and first communions and other things. It was like meeting the old German cinema.

So this whole confrontation with the German world became something new and unexpectedly interesting. After all, I have a very Latin temperament. My cultural ties are all Spanish, French and Italian. So I now see *The Tin Drum* as having opened me to Northern and Slavic influences. In fact, my next project is with Wajda and is based on a play written by a young Polish writer about the French revolution. The writer was a woman who killed herself in the thirties and the play is *The Danton Case:* it's about the last weeks in the life of Danton.

What is it like when you work with Buñuel?

It's a very surrealistic ambiance, in that we are coming up with all kinds of fantasies. The trick is to select the fantasies that can work on paper, and discard the others. It's hard to explain why certain fantasies work. It's probably because they correspond directly to a very subterranean reality. We never ask, "What does that mean?" For example, in *That Obscure Object of Desire,* we were putting together that scene with the gypsy woman. Buñuel said, "What if she carries a little pig in her arms?" I don't know how he got the idea, but it immediately seemed right. Humorous as well as realistic in a certain sense. So I said yes. We each have a veto power. If one doesn't like an idea, the idea is discarded. The process could be described as dreaming together and then writing down our dreams. Of course, there is always the professional requirements—the technical insights, etc. But we also try to have fun. We try to avoid getting bored. Sometimes we're laughing all the time. Buñuel claims that when we haven't laughed during an entire workday, then the day should be considered as lost. It is the precise yet unpredictable quality of my work with Buñuel that I try to bring into my involvement with films such as *TheTin Drum.**

DENIS WOOD

The Empire's New Clothes

During the summers of 1977 and 1978, reviewers for the slicker film journals, the national newsweeklies, and the urban dailies prostrated themselves apotheosizing *Star Wars* as mindless entertainment. In the summer of 1980, the same reviewers intoned a rather different chorus in paean to *The Empire Strikes Back,* taking their cue from George Lucas, the film's author, sometime scenarist and executive producer, who frequently stated "It's going to be different and I think some people are going to say: 'I want it to be like the first one.' I couldn't do that. I just can't do the same formula over and over again. It would bore me silly."[1] Watching the film through Lucas-prescribed lenses, most critics indeed saw a more "human," more romantic, and more serious film, one in which the "cardboard characters" of *Star Wars* had been given three dimensions and in which its "comic-book verve" had been supplanted (though some said "enriched") by an overt and portentous philosophizing reminiscent of Carlos

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THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

Castaneda at his most sophomoric. Socially oriented pundits actually predicted an improvement in moral tone as the preachings of Yoda pervaded the consciousness of American youths (who, despite the hype, have refused to take the dessicated dwarf to their bosoms), and serious debates revolved around the implications of Darth Vader's —to me, at least—unbelievable fathering of Luke. Treating the new film with the seriousness ordinarily reserved for Bergman or Fellini and comparing it to everything from Job to Dante, the critics managed to overlook the fact that it was nothing but a trivializing, if vastly more expensive, remake of the earlier film they'd laughed their way through. To the extent that the films tell Luke Skywalker's story, they are not merely similar, they are essentially identical. Only a perverse sort of willful blindness can explain the widespread failure to observe this reality.

You don't for example, have to be a structuralist to see the seering sands of Tatooine in the savage snow of the planet Hoth; nor do you have to have excessive perspicaciousness to note that Luke lives underground on an isolated outpost in each environment. The wilderness surrounding each compound is appropriately inhabited, that of Tatooine by the benign Jawas and the deadly Tusken Raiders, that of Hoth by the useful Tauntauns and the monstrous Wampa. Both are places littered with the skeletons of large creatures, half-buried in the sands of Tatooine, frozen into the floor of Wampa's cave. Luke's involvement in *Star Wars* begins when an escape pod containing two droids lands on the desert floor; in *The Empire Strikes Back* when a pod containing an Imperial probe droid hits the powdery snow. Pulled into the wasteland by a droid in both films—to recover R2-D2 in the first, to investigate the Imperial probe in the second—Luke is attacked, dragged off and left unconscious by both the Tusken Raiders and the Wampa. In the earlier film, Luke is saved when Ben Kenobi appears on a ridge, howling like a Krayt dragon; in the subsequent film just after Ben Kenobi materializes in the distance urging him to visit Dagobah. In *Star Wars* this encounter with Kenobi is soon followed by Luke's discovery that Imperial troopers, on Vader's quest, have destroyed his aunt and uncle's farm; in *The Empire Strikes Back* it is soon followed by the successful attack by Imperial troopers, under Vader's command, on the Rebel base. Bereft of home in each case, Luke sets forth on Kenobi's errand, with Kenobi in the first film to return R2-D2 to Leia's father, at his behest in the second film to work with Yoda. In

the first film Luke is instructed in the ways of the force en route to the Death Star, which has replaced Alderaan in the Alderaan system; in the second film, he is instructed in the ways of the force on Dagobah, a waystop, as it turns out en route to the Cloud City.

Any two films are bound to manifest similarities, but the Death Star is a spherical metal city floating in space, while the Cloud City is a disc-shaped metal city hovering in the clouds. Although Tarkin is in nominal control of the former, and Lando Calrissian of the latter, it is Darth Vader that makes the real decisions in both places. Sucked into the Death Star by the chain of events (materially aided by a tractor beam) and into the Cloud City by a complicated plot (activated through the force), Luke rushes through confusing corridors in both places firing his blaster. Shortly after his arrival in each place, Leia is freed from Vader's dominion; and shortly after that Luke leaps to escape Imperials, across the chasm in the first film, out of the carbon-freezing chamber in the second. In *Star Wars* Luke's culminating duel with Vader takes place above the Death Star in an X-wing fighter based on a moon of the planet Yavin; in *The Empire Strikes Back*, it takes place on foot within the Cloud City hovering over the planet Bespin. Again, you don't have to be structuralist to see that the jungle-clad moon of Yavin is to the empty desert of Tatooine as the gaseous planet of Bespin is to the frozen hulk of Hoth.

Nor are the duels dissimilar. Chasing Luke down the trench on the Death Star, Vader remarks, "The Force is strong with this one"; greeting Luke on Bespin, Vader says, "The Force is with you, Luke Skywalker." Harrowingly alike are the films' conclusions. At the end of *Star Wars*, Luke is saved when the Millenium Falcon knocks Vader from the trench; at the end of *The Empire Strikes Back*, Luke is saved when the Millenium Falcon rescues him from the underside of the Cloud City. As it hurtles toward the trench above the Death Star, the Millenium Falcon cuts across a brilliant star, flaring its light into a halo; as it commences its return to the Cloud City, the Millenium Falcon rolls around a bank of luminous clouds, silhouetting itself against the flaming ether. In the first film's epilogue, Luke is honored by Leia with a medal around his neck; in its successor, he is honored to put his arm around her shoulder. Both films close *in media res*, an Imperial base having been destroyed in the former, a Rebel base in the latter . . .

This is hardly exhaustive. Any number of scenes have been transported with only minor alterations from the first film into its successor. There is, for instance, little difference between Luke's refusal to heed Ben's plea to join him and begin his training in the first film, and his refusal to countenance Ben's insistence that he remain on Dagobah and complete his training with Yoda in the second. There is still less difference between the scenes in which Luke attempts to convince Uncle Owen to let him join the academy, in the first film, and Yoda to take him on as a student, in the second film. Not only is his tone of exasperated and disappointed pleading identical, but both efforts occur at mealtime in the presence of a placatory third party—Aunt Beru in the first case and Ben in the second, both of whom take Luke's side. And there is really no difference at all between the scene in his uncle's garage in which he peevishly tries to scrape away the carbon scoring around R2-D2's large "eye"; and that in his "camp" on Dagobah in which he plaintively removes the mucky ooze from the same sensory organ. "I'll never get out of here!" he groans on Tatooine. "What am I doing here?" he moans, on Dagobah.

But if in both these latter scenes Luke is petulantly poking his finger around R2-D2's eye, the meaning and weight of that poking in the one scene is essentially unrelated and unrelatable to the meaning and weight of that poking in the other. In the scene in *Star Wars* our attention is focused on the droids. It is, after all, the droids who have been the center of the film, the threads that have held together the blindingly rapid exposition, and, at this point, as far as we know, it is their story, not Luke's. Luke has been on the screen less than five minutes, and has not been presented as entirely likable: he has whined and complained to his uncle and treated the droids like dirt. The encounter in the garage, then is fraught with tension. Who is this kid? What kind of person is he? How will he treat the droids? What will he do with them? This sense of apprehension has been constructed not only out of our extrapolation forward from the sequence of unexpected events

preceding it, but out of C-3PO's dialogue. "We've stopped!! We're doomed!" he cries in the Jawa crawler. "Do you think they'll melt us down?" That Luke's intentions toward the droids is, at this moment, the film's only concern invests his behavior with significance. His changing tones of voice, his simplest gestures, are data toward the resolution of a tension that gives the film a *thematic* structure enabling it to project its narrative and dramatic structures out of the theater into the world.

Nothing could be farther from the case than the parallel scene in *The Empire Strikes Back*. Here our attention is focused on Luke. The film opens with Luke in heroic action and paints him as loved by Han, Leia, and the rest of his fellow rebels. This adulation would seem to be well merited: he is apparently selfless, kind, and considerate of everyone. Unfortunately, his character is so thoroughly painted that there is no room left for growth, least of all in his relationship with R2-D2. Their mutual devotion would seem to be quite real, but where in *Star Wars* it developed on Luke's part from scorn and disdain through admiration and trust to something approaching friendship, here it is coyly presented as a stable master-servant relationship, where fondness, not friendship, dominates. It is symptomatic, for example, that on the flight to Dagobah, Luke does not share with R2-D2 the *purpose* of the trip, although the droid is evidently anxious to understand why they are doing what they are. While this minor anxiety does dramatically fuel what is doubtless one of the film's finest scenes, its essential quiescence underscores the fact that for Luke and R2-D2 the narrative line of the earlier portion of the film has definitely concluded.

Thus, instead of exfoliating continuously as *Star Wars* does, *The Empire Strikes Back* is forced to move forward in brief, narratively sequential but independent episodes which prevent the dramatic structure of the film from building. It is not, as so many have complained, that the film has no "real" ending, *but that it has no significant middle.* It is not that Luke's rescue by the Falcon does not release us from the tension of his encounter with Vader, but that this release is local, circumscribed by the episode itself, precisely as Luke's dialogue with R2-D2 is circumscribed by the literal boundaries of the dialogue. Consequently, unlike the scene in the garage in *Star Wars* in which extra-scenic elements endowed it with significance for the *film,* and thus freighted Luke's actions with meaning, these scenes in *The Empire Strikes Back* are constrained to depend solely on the intrinsic qualities of the scene's dialogue in isolation and on Hamill's person and skill as an actor. Since these latter are not negligible, the scene in the fighter on its way to Dagobah *is* worth watching, but it, like nearly every other scene in the film, could be deleted without affecting any other.

The early scenes on Dagobah are similarly isolated, set pieces without narrative, dramatic, or thematic connection to those which precede or follow. When, in *Star Wars,* Luke is pulled beneath the liquid in the garbage chute, Han's "Luke!! Kid!!" is freighted with dramatic significance: it is his first admission of the affection for Luke, heretofore masked beneath his bantering and distancing disdain, which will cause him to rescue Luke in the film's climax. But when in a similar scene R2-D2 is sucked into the swamp on Dagobah, Luke's "R2!! R2!!" reveals and adumbrates nothing not already known. Significantly, the scene is ultimately played for laughs, and we finally recognize that it represents little more than a one-line joke, closed in its completeness like a Bob Hope throwaway. When, finally, Luke begins to clean R2-D2 by scooping the muck from his eye, the scene is effective because of the poignancy with which *Mark Hamill* is able to invest it, not because Luke's action has any relevance to the rest of the film. With no narrative function, with minimal dramatic role, and thematic significance—if any—so elusive as to be next to nonexistent, Luke's words and gestures are weightless, and since nothing plus nothing is nothing, incapable of combining with his other words and gestures—howsoever intrinsically beautiful they may or may not be—to make a thing greater than a collection of its parts.

It is, in fact, the narrative identity of the films that actually dictates such dramatic and thematic differences. After all, the dramatic structure of *Star Wars* resolves around Luke's evolution from a self-centered jerk to a selfless hero, an evolution played out through the development of Luke's ability to distinguish the truly living from the walk-

ing dead, and the growth of his capacity to humanely determine the limits to which he can legitimately make others an extension of his will. By the film's end he has learned these lessons and become a whole and living human being. The story he is made to repeat in *The Empire Strikes Back* gave him in *Star Wars* opportunities for affirmations: here it gives him opportunities only for *re*affirmations. The difference is the difference between an immigrant from Paraguay saying the Pledge of Allegiance at his naturalization ceremony and a jaded seventh-grade suburbanite saying the Pledge of Allegiance at a school assembly. The problem is that Luke has long since ceased being a jerk and is well on his way toward canonization. Instead of becoming a hero, he has become a hero; instead of being tested, he is merely vexed. This was not lost on the screenwriters, who attempted to recoup the lost dramatic energy by testing Luke at every turn of the projector's reel. Sadly, most of the tests are simply physical—surviving the destruction of his snowspeeder, for instance, or climbing, running, jumping, swinging, and standing on his hands—feats of endurance more appropriate to a bionic man than the hero of a moral epic.

What were intended to pass for the serious tests, or rather *re*tests—the episode in the magic tree and the rejection of Vader revealed as his father—are either unapproachably symbolic or all too easy. Vader has been portrayed as so heinous that his claim to be Luke's father—if it can be believed—is no claim at all, and Luke's rejection consequently constitutes no test at all. Comparison of Luke's rejection of Vader, revealed as his father, with Kenny Dantley's acceptance of McGrath, revealed as the thief of his car (also played by Hamill in Robbins and Barwood's *Corvette Summer*) is instructive. Robbins and Barwood, as it were, demonstrated the power of the dark side of the Force *dramatically*, by permitting Dantley to be seduced; Lucas and Kershner remark its impotence by forcing Luke to remain—unheroically, since the choice is forced upon him—pure. Nor do they succeed in their attempt to dramatize its power through the episode of the magic tree. Although in the context of the film's objective perspective and realistic *mise en scène* I find the sudden switch to slow-motion, eerie music, and grainy texture highly out of place, it would be dogmatically narrow-minded to object to it only on those grounds. The scene fails not because it impugns empiricist materialism, but by virtue of its incomprehensibility, its impenetrable ambiguity, its opaque allusiveness. Before the scene can connect dramatically with its audience, it must make clear what Luke is facing and how—and we now have only Yoda's word for this—he fails. Could it not, in fact, be possible to interpret the episode as Luke's triumphant exorcism of the Vader within him? It could, but before any reading is possible, it is necessary to have some understanding of what is going on: does the magic tree generate the image? or does Luke project it? is Luke battling the dark side of the Force? or himself? We, no more than Luke, are permitted to know, and when Luke asks, Yoda rejoins with, "No more questions!" But it is not Luke alone who demands the answers: in their absence the scene is only bewildering, further sapping the film of dramatic cogency and thematic coherence.

Nor is it with respect to Luke alone that the film fails: more impressive but essentially similar cases can be made for Han, Leia, the droids, and Vader. All reprise travesties of their earlier roles. For all the glib talk about the exposition of character in *The Empire Strikes Back*, those of Han and Leia suffer limited development. That they achieve a rapproachment is undeniable, but that this reveals anything about either character is not. The droids, for whom Lucas claims special affection, endure a far worse fate. As inappropriate as was their Laurel and Hardy tag with respect to the first film it is now grotesquely out of place. The droids have degenerated into the Edward Everett Hortons and Eric Blores of thirties musicals—amusingly squabbling body servants. The dialogue accompanying their initial appearance makes this obvious: R2-D2 has soaked Leia's wardrobe by raising the temperature in her bedroom! Vader, less powerful than the Emperor, less cunning than Boba Fett, is only marginally more adept than the young kid from Tatooine. The only ruthlessness he displays ends in a comic routine that perfectly parallels the Falcon's inability to leap to hyperspace: just as we come to realize that the Falcon will *not* take off, so we soon come to accept the recurrent throttling of Imperial commanders.

When the Falcon finally does disappear, Vader predictably fails to kill his sacrificial admiral. With Vader in a nearly comic role, with the droids playing Horton and Blore to Han and Leia's Fred and Ginger, with Luke frozen on the verge of his canonization, the film never quite takes off either, but hangs there like a Johnny Carson monologue, enthralling as long as the promise of another joke remains, but utterly dead when it's done.

It may be recalled that Lucas had problems making Vader convincing in *Star Wars:*

> I was struggling with the problem that I had this sort of climactic scene that had no climax about two-thirds of the way through the film. I had another problem in the fact that there was no real threat in the Death Star. The villains were like tenpins; you get into a gun fight with them and they just get knocked over. As I originally wrote it, Ben Kenobi and Vader had a sword fight and Ben hits a door and Vader is left standing with egg on his face. This was dumb . . .[2]

The resolution, as is well known, was the decision to kill off Kenobi, something communicated to Alec Guinness in the very midst of shooting. It was, as Marcia Lucas felt—who apparently originated the idea—perfectly outrageous. Yet, however nervy, it did solve her husband's problem. It is evidence of precisely this sort of nerve, the very kind Lucas showed when he conceived of and pushed the idea of *Star Wars* in the first place, that is missing from *The Empire Strikes Back.* It took nerve to do science fiction when science fiction was dead. It took nerve to drive the narrative at its dizzying pace. It took nerve to insist on the dialogue when even the actors were claiming to gag on it. It took nerve to kill off Kenobi. And it took nerve to bring him back.

But it took more than nerve to bring him back *as a voice.* It took acumen. Nothing so certainly distinguishes the first film from the second as the treatment of Kenobi in death. The spectral voice that spoke to Luke alone could be taken a thousand ways, as Kenobi's "soul," as the music of the spheres, as Luke taking Kenobi's part in interior debate. The polysemy, far from being confusing, was Empsonian, positive, and enriching, the very essence of popular art. Kenobi's appearance in *The Empire Strikes Back,* enwreathed in flickerign blue halos like the Virgin appearing to Bernadette Soubirous, sweeps all that away in the pointless concretization of an interesting mystery. Instead of exploding possibilities, we are presented with a cheap chromolithograph, a vision revealing its loss of vision, its loss of nerve, its loss of daring, its loss of verve. It is a loss that pervades every frame of the film, vitiating not only the characterizations, the narration, the drama and any sense of thematic cohesion, but the composition (as, for instance, of Lando, Leia, Chewie and the droids racing to save Han, the camera belly down on the stage floor for who knows what reason), the lighting (softened, bounced, and diffuse, reducing the film's sense of immediacy), the set design (as in the Cloud City interiors, parodies of the dinner clubs catering to high school proms), matte work (as in the backgrounds on Dagobah or the exteriors of the Cloud City, patently matte work, and ripped off from some Deco vision of the twenties city), model construction (especially of the Walkers), animation (as of the Tauntaum returning to the base)—in a word, the *direction* of the film.

If any contemporary film can be said to be the work of one man, *Star Wars* is such a film. Lucas wrote the story and the screenplay, directed, helped edit and produce the film, and actively involved himself in every phase of the production. However you felt about this film, you felt the strong voice of a single individual speaking through it. It is a voice that does not speak through *The Empire Strikes Back.* Arguing that he could never make a film as good as *The Seven Samurai,* though in the opinion of many he already had; that he was only interested in making pure film, though one of the great joys of *Star Wars* was its brilliance as elemental cinema; and that he was a poor director of actors, though this is not supported by his exemplary direction of *American Graffiti* or *Star*

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Wars; Lucas bowed out as director of *The Empire Strikes Back.* Had he wanted to test the importance of direction to the making of a film, he could scarcely have designed a better experiment: with the same story, the same cast, the same producer, and much of the same creative crew, a film was made that had everything in common with its predecessor but conviction, verve, and bazzazz, the very unreproducible elements that made *Star Wars* a success in the first place. In a sense, *The Empire Strikes Back* constitutes an ironic commentary on Lucas's fate. The daring young man with nothing to lose wrote himself into the first film as the selfless hero to whom he gave his name. The name's the same but the game is different. The gutsy kid battling the Hollywood system in the name of all creative spirits is now the aging wonder battling his individual success, for it is success that is the dark side of the Force, and it is success that holds Lucas in thrall. His protestations to the contrary notwithstanding, he has in *The Empire Strikes Back* done "the same formula over again." The differences between the films are sufficiently negligible that had anyone else made *The Empire Strikes Back,* Lucas could have sued for plagiarism and won—plagiarism of everything but the point of the enterprise, the only thing he couldn't copy. It is the essence of my sense of betrayal not that he didn't copy himself, but that he did.

NOTES

1. Quoted in John May, editor, *Star Wars—The Empire Strikes Back.* Paradise Press, Ridgefield, Connecticut, 1980, 62
2. Quoted in Paul Scanlon, "The Force Behind George Lucas," *Rolling Stone.* August 25, 1977, 48.

NOEL CARROLL

Nightmare and the Horror Film: The Symbolic Biology of Fantastic Beings

Whereas the Western and the crime film were the dominant genres of the late sixties and early seventies, horror and science fiction are the reigning popular forms of the late seventies and early eighties. Launched by blockbusters like *The Exorcist* and *Jaws,* the cycle has flourished steadily; it seems as unstoppable as some of the demons it has spawned. The present cycle, like the horror cycle of the thirties and the science fiction cycle of the fifties, comes at a particular kind of moment in American history—one where feelings of paralysis, helplessness, and vulnerability (hallmarks of the nightmare) prevail. If the Western and the crime film worked well as open forums for the debate about our values and our history during the years of the Vietnam war, the horror and science fiction film poignantly expresses the sense of powerlessness and anxiety that correlates with times of depression, recession, Cold War strife, galloping inflation, and national confusion.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the basic structures and themes of these timely genres by extending some of the points made in Ernest Jones's *On the Nightmare.*[1] Jones used his analysis of the nightmare to unravel the symbolic meaning and structure of such figures of medieval superstition as the incubus, vampire, werewolf, devil, and witch. Similarly, I will consider the manner in which the imagery of the horror/science fiction film is constructed in ways that correspond to the construction of nightmare imagery. My special, though not exclusive, focus will be on the articulation of the imagery horrific creatures—on what I call their symbolic biologies. A less pretentious subtitle for this essay might have been "How to make a monster."

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Before beginning this "unholy" task, some qualifications are necessary. Throughout this article I will slip freely between examples drawn from horror films and science fiction films. Like many connoisseurs of science fiction literature, I think that, historically, movie science fiction has evolved as a sub-class of the horror film. That is, in the main, science fiction films are monster films, rather than explorations of grand themes like alternate societies or alternate technologies.

Secondly, I am approaching the horror/science fiction film in terms of a psychoanalytic framework, though I do not believe that psychoanalysis is a hermeneutic method that can be applied unproblematically to any kind of film or work of art. Consequently, the adoption of psychoanalysis as an interpretive tool in a given case should be accompanied by a justification for its use in regard to that case. And in this light, I would argue that it is appropriate to use psychoanalysis in relation to the horror film because within our culture the horror genre is explicitly acknowledged as a vehicle for expressing psychoanalytically significant themes such as repressed sexuality, oral sadism, necrophilia, etc. Indeed, in recent films, such as Jean Rollin's *Le Frisson des Vampires* and *La Vampire Nue,* all concealment of the psychosexual subtext of the vampire myth is discarded. We have all learned to treat the creatures of the night—like werewolves—as creatures of the id, whether we are spectators or film-makers. As a matter of social tradition, psychoanalysis is more or less the *lingua franca* of the horror film and thus the privileged critical tool for discussing the genre. In fact horror films often seem to be little more than bowdlerized, pop psychoanalysis, so enmeshed is Freudian psychology with the genre.

Nor is the coincidence of psychoanalytic themes and those of the horror genre only a contemporary phenomenon. Horror has been tied to nightmare and dream since the inception of the modern tradition. Over a century before the birth of psychoanalysis Horace Walpole wrote of the *Castle of Otranto.*

> I waked one morning, in the beginning of last June, from a dream, of which all I could recover was, that I had thought myself in an ancient castle (a very natural dream for a head like mine filled with Gothic story) and that on the uppermost bannister of a great staircase I saw a gigantic hand in armour. In the evening I sat down, and began to write, without knowing in the least what I intended to say or relate. The work grew on my hands and I grew so fond of it that one evening, I wrote from the time I had drunk my tea, about six o'clock, till half an hour after one in the morning, when my hands and fingers were so weary that I could not hold the pen to finish the sentence.

The assertion that a given horror story originated as a dream or nightmare occurs often enough that one begins to suspect that it is something akin to invoking a muse (or an incubus or succubus, as the case may be). Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein,* Bram Stoker's *Dracula,* and Henry James's "The Jolly Corner" are all attributed to fitful sleep as is much of Robert Louis Stevenson's output—notably *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.*[2] In what sense these tales were caused by nightmares or modeled on dreams is less important than the fact that the nightmare is a culturally established framework for presenting and understanding the horror genre. And this makes the resort to psychoanalysis unavoidable.

A central concept in Jones's treatment of the imagery of nightmare is conflict. The products of the dreamwork are often simultaneously attractive and repellent insofar as they function to enunciate both a wish and its inhibition. Jones writes, "The reason why the object seen in a Nightmare is frightful or hideous is simply that the representation of the underlying wish is not permitted in its naked form so that the dream is a compromise of the wish on the one hand and on the other of the intense fear belonging to the inhibition."[3] The notion of the conflict between attraction and repulsion is particularly useful in considering the horror film, as a corrective to alternate ways of treating the genre. Too often, writing about this genre only emphasizes one side of the imagery. Many journalists will single-mindedly underscore only the repellent aspects of a horror film—rejecting it as disgusting, indecent, and foul. Yet this tack fails to offer any account of why people are interested in seeing such exercises.

On the other hand, defenders of the genre or of a specific example of the genre will often indulge in allegorical readings that render their subjects wholly appealing and that do not acknowledge their repellent aspects. Thus, we are told that Frankenstein is really an existential parable about man thrown-into-the-world, an "isolated suf-

ferer."[4] But if *Frankenstein* is part *Nausea,* it is also nauseating. Where in the allegorical formulation can we find an explanation for the purpose of the unsettling effect of the charnel-house imagery? The dangers of this allegorizing/valorizing tendency can be seen in some of the work of Robin Wood, the most vigorous champion of the contemporary horror film. *Sisters,* he writes, "analyzes the ways in which women are oppressed within patriarchal society on two levels which one can define as professional (Grace) and the psychosexual (Danielle/Dominque)."[5]

One wants to say "perhaps but. . . ." Specifically, what about the unnerving, gory murders and the brackish, fecal bond that links the Siamese twins? Horror films cannot be construed as completely repelling or completely appealing. Either outlook denies something essential to the form. Jones's use of the concept of conflict in the nightmare to illuminate the symbolic portent of the monsters of superstition, therefore, suggests a direction of research into the study of the horror film which accords with the genre's unique combination of repulsion and delight.

To conclude my qualifying remarks, I must note that as a hardline Freudian, Jones suffers from one important liability; he over-emphasizes the degree to which incestuous desires shape the conflicts in the nightmare (and, by extension, in the formation of fantastic beings) and he claims that nightmares always relate to the sexual act.[6] As John Mack has argued, this perspective is too narrow; "the analysis of nightmares regularly leads us to the earliest, most profound, and inescapable anxieties and conflicts to which human beings are subject: those involving destructive aggression, castration, separation and abandonment, devouring and being devoured, and fear regarding loss of identity and fusion with the mother."[7] Thus, modifying Jones, we will study the nightmare conflicts embodied in the horror film as having broader reference than simply sexuality.

Our starting hypothesis is that horror film imagery, like that of the nightmare, incarnates archaic, conflicting impulses. Furthermore, this assumption orients inquiry, leading us to review horror film imagery with an eye to separating out thematic strands that represent opposing attitudes. To clarify what is involved in this sort of analysis, an example is in order.

When *The Exorcist* first opened, responses to it were extreme. It was denounced as a new cultural low at the same time that extra theaters had to be found in New York, Los Angeles, and other cities to accommodate the overflow crowds. The imagery of the film touched deep chords in our national psyche. The spectacle of possession addressed and reflected profound fears and desires never before explored in film. The basic infectious terror in the film is that personal identity is a frail thing, easily lost. Linda Blair's Regan, with her "tsks" and her "ahs," is a model of middle-class domesticity, a vapid mask quickly engulfed by repressed powers. The character is not just another evil child in the tradition of *The Bad Seed.* It is an expression of the fear that beneath the self we present to others are forces that can erupt to obliterate every vestige of self-control and personal identity.

In *The Exorcist,* the possibility of the loss of self is greeted with both terror and glee. The fear of losing self-control is great, but the manner in which that loss is manifested is attractive. Once possessed, Regan's new powers, exhibited in hysterical displays of cinematic pyrotechnics, act out the imagery of infantile beliefs in the omnipotence of the will. Each grisly scene is a celebration of infantile rage. Regan's anger cracks doors and ceilings and levitates beds. And she can deck a full-grown man with a flick of a wrist. The audience is aghast at her loss of self-control, which begins fittingly enough with her urinating on the living room rug, but at the same time its archaic beliefs in the metaphysical prowess of the emotions are cinematically confirmed. Thought is given direct causal efficacy. Regan's feelings know no bounds; they pour out of her, tearing her own flesh apart with their intensity and hurling people and furniture in every direction. Part of the legacy of *The Exorcist* to its successors—like *Carrie, The Fury* and *Patrick,* to name but a few titles in this rampant subgenre—is the fascination with telekinesis, which is nothing but a cinematic metaphor of the unlimited power of repressed rage. The audience is both drawn to and repelled by it—we recognize such rage in ourselves and superstitiously fear its emergence, while simultaneously we are pleased

when we see a demonstration, albeit fictive, of the power of that rage.[8]

Christopher Lasch has argued that the neurotic personality of our time vacillates between fantasies of self-loathing and infantile delusions of grandeur.[9] The strength of *The Exorcist* is that it captures this oscillation cinematically. Regan, through the machinations of Satan, is the epitome of self-hatred and self-degradation—a filthy thing, festering in its bed, befoulling itself, with fetid breath, full of scabs, dirty hair, and a complexion that makes her look like a pile of old newspapers.

The origins of this self-hatred imagery is connected with sexual themes. Regan's sudden concupiscence corresponds with a birthday, presumably her thirteenth. There are all sorts of allusions to masturbation: not only does Regan misuse the crucifix, splattering her thighs with blood in an act symbolic of both loss of virginity and menstruation, but later her hands are bound (one enshrined method for stopping "self-abuse") and her skin goes bad (as we were all warned it would). Turning the head 360 degrees also has sexual connotations; in theology, it is described as a technique Satan uses when sodomizing witches. Regan incarnates images of worthlessness, of being virtually trash, in a context laden with sex and self-laceration. But the moments of self-degradation give way to images that express delusions of grandeur as she rocks the house in storms of rage. She embodies moods of guilt and rebellion, of self-loathing and omnipotence that speak to the Narcissus in each of us.

The fantastic beings of horror films can be seen as symbolic formations that organize conflicting themes into figures that are simultaneously attractive and repulsive. Two major symbolic structures appear most prominent in this regard: fusion, in which the conflicting themes are yoked together in one, spatio-temporally unified figure; and fission, in which the conflicting themes are distributed—over space or time—among more than one figure.

Dracula, one of the classic film monsters, falls into the category of fusion. In order to identify the symbolic import of this figure we can begin

"figures that are simultaneously attractive and repulsive": DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE

with Jones's account of vampires—since Dracula is a vampire—but we must also amplify that account since Dracula is a very special vampire. According to Jones, the vampires of superstition have two fundamental constituent attributes: revenance and blood sucking. The mythic, as opposed to movie, vampire first visits its relatives. For Jones, this stands for the relatives' longing for the loved one to return from the dead. But the figure is charged with terror. What is fearful is blood sucking, which Jones associates with seduction. In short, the desire for an incestuous encounter with the dead relative is transformed, through a form of denial, into an assault—attraction and love metamorphose into repulsion and sadism. At the same time, via projection, the living portray themselves as passive victims, imbuing the dead with a dimension of active agency that permits the "victim" pleasure without blame. Lastly, Jones not only connects blood sucking with the exhausting embrace of the incubus but with a regressive mixture of sucking and biting characteristic of the oral stage of psychosexual development. By negation—the transformation of love to hate, by projection—through which the desired dead become active, and the desiring living passive, and by regression—from genital to oral sexuality, the vampire legend gratifies incestuous and necrophiliac desires by amalgamating them in a fearsome iconography.

The vampire of lore and the Dracula figure of stage and screen have several points of tangency, but Dracula also has a number of distinctive attributes. Of necessity, Dracula is Count Dracula. He is an aristocrat; his bearing is noble; and, of course, through hypnosis, he is a paradigmatic authority figure. He is commanding in both senses of the word. Above all, Dracula demands *obedience* of his minions and mistresses. He is extremely old—associated with *ancient* castles—and possessed of incontestable strength. Dracula cannot be overcome by force—he can only be outsmarted or outmaneuvered; humans are typically described as puny in comparison to him. At times, Dracula is invested with omniscience, observing from afar the measures taken against him. He also hoards women and is a harem master. In brief, Dracula is a bad father figure, often balanced off against Van Helsing who defends virgins against the seemingly younger, more vibrant Count. The phallic symbolism of Dracula is hard to miss—he is aged, buried in a filthy place, impure, powerful, and aggressive.

The contrast with Van Helsing immediately suggests another cluster of Dracula's attributes. He does appear the younger of the two specifically because he represents the rebellious son at the same time that he is the violent father. This identification is achieved by means of the Satanic imagery that contributes to Dracula's persona. Dracula is the Devil—one film in fact refers to him in its title as the "Prince of Darkness." With few exceptions, Dracula is depicted as eternally uncontrite, bent on luring hapless souls. Most importantly, Dracula is a modern devil which, as Jones points out, means that he is a rival to God. Religiously, Dracula is presented as a force of unmitigated evil. Dramatically, this is translated into a quantum of awesome will or willfulness, often flexed in those mental duels with Van Helsing. Dracula, in part, exists as a rival to the father, as a figure of defiance and rebellion, fulfilling the oedipal wish via a hero of Miltonic proclivities. The Dracula image, then, is a fusion of conflicting attributes of the bad (primal) father and the rebellious son which is simultaneously appealing and forbidding because of the way it conjoins different dimensions of the oedipal fantasy.

The fusion of conflicting tendencies in the figure of the monster in horror films has the dream process of condensation as its approximate psychic prototype. In analyzing the symbolic meaning of these fusion figures our task is to individuate the conflicting themes that constitute the creature. Like Dracula, the Frankenstein monster is a fusion figure, one that is quite literally a composite. Mary Shelley first dreamed of the creature at a time in her life fraught with tragedies connected with childbirth.[10] Victor Frankenstein's creation—his "hideous progeny"—is a gruesome parody of birth; indeed, Shelley's description of the creature's appearance bears passing correspondences to that of a newborn—its waxen skin, misshapen head, and touch of jaundice. James Whale's *Frankenstein* also emphasizes the association of the monster with a child; its walk is unsteady and halting, its head is outsized and its eyes sleepy. And in the film, though not in the novel, the crea-

ture's basic cognitive skills are barely developed; it is mystified by fire and has difficulty differentiating between little girls and flowers. The monster in one respect is a child and its creation is a birth that is presented as ghastly. At the same time, the monster is made of waste, of dead things, in "Frankenstein's workshop of filthy creation." The excremental reference is hardly disguised. The association of the creature with waste implies that, in part, the story is underwritten by the infantile confusion over the processes of elimination and reproduction. The monster is reviled as heinous and as unwholesome filth, rejected by its creator —its father—perhaps in a way that reorchestrated Mary Shelley's feelings of rejection by her father William Godwin.

But these images of loathesomeness are fused with opposite qualities. In the film myth, the monster is all but omnipotent (it can function as a sparring partner for Godzilla), indomitable and, for all intents and purposes, immortal (perhaps partly for the intent and purpose of sequels). It is both helpless and powerful, worthless and godlike. Its rejection spurs rampaging vengeance, combining fury and strength in infantile orgies of rage and destruction. Interestingly, in the novel this ire is directed against Victor Frankenstein's family. And even in Whale's 1931 version of the myth the monster's definition as outside (excluded from a place in) the family is maintained in a number of ways: the killing of Maria; the juxtaposition of the monster's wandering over the countryside with wedding preparations; and the opposition of Frankenstein's preoccupation with affairs centered around the monster to the interest of propagating an heir to the family barony. The emotional logic of the tale proceeds from the initial loathesomeness of the monster, which triggers its rejection, which causes the monster to explode in omnipotent rage over its alienation from the family, which, in turn, confirms the earlier intimation of "badness," thereby justifying the parental rejection.[11] This scenario, moreover, is predicated on the inherently conflicting tendencies—of being waste and being god—that are condensed in the creature from the start. It is, therefore, a necessary condition for the success of the tale that the creature be repellent.

One method for composing fantastic beings is

BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN: *Elsa Lanchester and Boris Karloff*

fusion. On the visual level, this often entails the construction of creatures that transgress categorical distinctions such as inside/outside, insect/human, flesh/machine, etc.[12] The particular affective significance of these admixtures depends to a large extent on the specific narrative context in which they are embedded. But apart from fusion, another means for articulating emotional conflicts in horror films is fission. That is, conflicts concerning sexuality, identity, aggressiveness, etc. can be mapped over different entities—each standing for a different facet of the conflict—which are nevertheless linked by some magical, supernatural, or sci-fi process. The type of creatures that I have in mind here include *doppelgängers,* alter-egos, and werewolves.

Fission has two major modes in the horror film.[13] The first distributes the conflict over space through the creation of doubles, e.g., *The Portrait of Dorian Gray, The Student of Prague,* and *Warning Shadows.* Structurally, what is involved in spatial fission is a process of multiplication, i.e., a character or set of characters is multiplied into one or more new facets each standing for another aspect of the self, generally one that is either hidden, ignored, repressed, or denied by the character who has been cloned. These examples each employ some mechanism of reflection—a portrait, a mirror, shadows—as the pretext for doubling. But this sort of fission figure can appear without such devices. In *I Married a Monster from Outer Space,* a young bride begins to suspect that her new husband is not quite himself. Somehow he's different than the man she used to date. And she's

quite right. Her boyfriend was kidnapped by invaders from outer space on his way back from a bachelor party and was replaced by an alien duplicate. This double, however, initially lacks feelings—the essential characteristic of being human in fifties sci-fi films—and his bride intuits this. The basic story, sci-fi elements aside, resembles a very specific paranoid delusion called Capgras syndrome. The delusion involves the patient's belief that his or her parents, lovers, etc. have become minatory *doppelgängers*. This enables the patient to deny his fear or hatred of a loved one by splitting the loved one in half, creating a bad version (the invader) and a good one (the victim). The new relation of marriage in *I Married a Monster* appears to engender a conflict, perhaps over sexuality, in the wife which is expressed through the fission figure.[14] Splitting as a psychic trope of denial is the root prototype for spatial fission in the horror film, organizing conflict through the multiplication of characters.

Fission occurs in horror films not only in terms of multiplication but also in terms of division. That is, a character can be divided in time as well as multiplied in space. *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and the various werewolves, cat people, gorgons, and other changelings of the genre are immediate examples. In the horror film, temporal fission—usually marked by shape changing—is often self-consciously concerned with repression. In *Curse of the Werewolf* one shot shows the prospective monster behind the bars of a wine cellar window holding a bottle; it is an icon of restrained delirium. The traditional conflict in these films is sexuality. Stevenson's *Jekyll and Hyde* is altered in screen variants so that the central theme of Hyde's brutality—which I think is connected to an allegory against alcoholism in the text—becomes a preoccupation with lechery. Often changeling films, like *The Werewolf of London* or *The Cat People,* eventuate in the monster attacking its lover, suggesting that this subgenre begins in infantile confusions over sexuality and aggression. The imagery of werewolf films also has been associated with conflicts connected with the bodily changes of puberty and adolescence: unprecedented hair spreads over the body, accompanied by uncontrollable, vaguely understood urges leading to puzzlement and even to fear of madness.[15] This imagery becomes especially compelling in *The Wolfman,* where the tension between father and son mounts through anger and tyranny until at last the father beats the son to death with a silver cane in a paroxysm of oedipal anxiety.[16]

Fusion and fission generate a large number of the symbolic biologies of horror films, but not all. Magnification of power or size—e.g., giant insects (and other exaggerated animalcules)—is another mode of symbol formation. Often magnification takes a particular phobia as its subject and, in general, much of this imagery seems comprehensible in terms of Freud's observation that "the majority of phobias . . . are traceable to such a fear on the ego's part of the demands of the libido."[17]

Giant insects are a case in point. The giant spider, for instance, appeared in silent film in John Barrymore's *Jekyll and Hyde* as an explicit symbol of desire. Perhaps insects, especially spiders, can perform this role not only because of their resemblance to hands—the hairy hands of masturbation—but also because of their cultural association with impurity.[18] At the same time, their identification as poisonous and predatory—devouring—can be mobilized to express anxious fantasies over sexuality. Like giant reptiles, giant insects are often encountered in two specific contexts in horror films. They inhabit negative paradises—jungles and lost worlds—that unaware humans happen into, not to find Edenic milk and honey but the gnashing teeth or mandibles of oral regression. Or, giant insects or reptiles are slumbering potentials of nature released or awakened by physical or chemical alterations caused by human experiments in areas of knowledge best left to the gods. Here, the predominant metaphor is that these creatures or forces have been unfettered or unleashed, suggesting their close connection with erotic impulses. Like the fusion and fission figures of horror films, these nightmares are also explicable as effigies of deep-seated, archaic conflicts.

So far I have dwelt on the symbolic composition of the monsters in horror films, extrapolating from the framework set out by Jones in *On the Nightmare* in the hope of beginning a crude approximation of a taxonomy. But before concluding, it is

worthwhile to consider briefly the relevance of archaic conflicts of the sort already discussed to the themes repeated again and again in the basic plot structures of the horror film.[19]

Perhaps the most serviceable narrative armature in the horror film genre is what I call the Discovery Plot. It is used in *Dracula, The Exorcist, Jaws I&II, It Came From Outer Space, Curse of the Demon, Close Encounters of the Third Kind, It Came From Beneath the Sea,* and myriad other films. It has four essential movements. The first is onset: the monster's presence is established, e.g., by an attack, as in *Jaws.* Next, the monster's existence is discovered by an individual or a group, but for one reason or another its existence or continued existence, or the nature of the threat it actually poses, is not acknowledged by the powers that be. "There are no such things as vampires," the police chief might say at this point. Discovery, therefore, flows into the next plot movement which is confirmation. The discoverers or believers must convince some other group of the existence and proportions of mortal danger at hand. Often this section of the plot is the most elaborate, and suspenseful. As the UN refuses to accept the reality of the onslaught of killer bees or invaders from Mars, precious time is lost, during which the creature or creatures often gain power and advantage. This interlude also allows for a great deal of discussion about the encroaching monster, and this talk about its invulnerability, its scarcely imaginable strength, and its nasty habits endows the off-screen beast with the qualities that prime the audience's fearful anticipation. Language is one of the most effective ingredients in a horror film and I would guess that the genre's primary success in sound film rather than silent film has less to do with the absence of sound effects in the silents than with the presence of all that dialogue about the unseen monster in the talkies.

After the hesitations of confirmation, the Discovery Plot culminates in confrontation. Mankind meets its monster, most often winning, but on occasion, like the remake of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers,* losing. What is particularly of interest in this plot structure is the tension caused by the delay between discovery and confirmation. Thematically, it involves the audience not only in the drama of proof but also in the play between knowing and not knowing,[20] between acknowledgment versus nonacknowledgment, that has the growing awareness of sexuality in the adolescent as its archetype. This conflict can become very pronounced when the gainsayers in question—generals, police chiefs, scientists, heads of institutions, etc.—are obviously parental authority figures.

Donald Sutherland in the toils of the delayed-discovery plot: INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS

Another important plot structure is that of the Overreacher. *Frankenstein, Jekyll and Hyde,* and *Man with the X-Ray Eyes* are all examples of this approach. Whereas the Discovery Plot often stresses the short-sightedness of science, the Overreacher Plot criticizes science's will to knowledge. The Overreacher Plot has four basic movements. The first comprises the preparation for the experiment, generally including a philosophical, popular-mechanics explanation or debate about the experiment's motivation. The overreacher himself (usually Dr. Soandso) can become quite megalomaniacal here, a quality commented upon, for instance, by the dizzingly vertical laboratory sets in *Frankenstein* and *Bride of Frankenstein.* Next comes the experiment itself, whose partial success allows for some more megalomania. But the experiment goes awry, leading to the destruction of innocent victims and/or to damage or threat to the experimenter or his loved ones. At this point, some overreachers renounce their blasphemy; the ones who don't are mad scientists. Finally, there is a confrontation with the monster, generally in the penultimate scene of the film.

The Overreacher Plot can be combined with the Discovery Plot by making the overreacher and/

or his experiments the object of discovery and confirmation. This yields a plot with seven movements—onset, discovery, confirmation, preparation for the experiment, experimentation, untoward consequences, and confrontation.* But the basic Overreacher Plot differs thematically from the Discovery Plot insofar as the conflicts central to the Overreacher Plot reside in fantasies of omniscience, omnipotence, and control. The plot eventually cautions against these impulses but not until it gratifies them with partial success and a strong dose of theatrical panache.

In suggesting that the plot structures and fantastic beings of the horror film correlate with nightmares and repulsive materials, I do not mean to claim that horror films are nightmares. Structurally, horror films are far more rationally ordered than nightmares, even in extremely disjunctive and dreamlike experiments like *Phantasm*. Moreover, phenomenologically, horror film buffs do not believe that they are literally the victims of the mayhem they witness whereas a dreamer can quite often become a participant and a victim in his/her dream. We can and do seek out horror films for pleasure, while someone who looked forward to a nightmare would be a rare bird indeed. Nevertheless, there do seem to be enough thematic and symbolic correspondences between nightmare and horror to indicate the distant genesis of horror motifs in nightmare as well as significant similarities between the two phenomena. Granted, these motifs become highly stylized on the screen. Yet, for some, the horror film may release some part of the tensions that would otherwise erupt in nightmares. Perhaps we can say that horror film fans go to the movies (in the afternoon) perchance to sleep (at night).

NOTES

1. Ernest Jones, *On the Nightmare* (London: Liveright, 1971).
2. M. Katan claims that *The Turn of the Screw* also originated in a nightmare. See "A Causerie on Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw*" in *Psychoanal. Stud. Child* 17: 473-493, 1962.
3. Jones, 78.
4. Frank McConnell, *Spoken Seen* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U. Press, 1975), 76.

*Confirmation as well as discovery may come after or between the next three movements in this structure.

5. Robin Wood, "*Sisters*," in *American Nightmare* (Toronto: Festival of Festivals Publication, 1979), 60.
6. Jones, 79.
7. John Mack, *Nightmares and Human Conflict* (Boston: Little Brown, 1970).
8. Rage is always an important component in horror films. Nevertheless, in the present horror cycle—given its fascination with telekinesis and omnipotent, Satanic children (and including the "psychoplasmic" imagery of *The Brood*)—rage has an unparalleled salience. In the America of Nixon, Ford and Carter, the recurring cine-fantasy seems to be of pent-up, channel-less anger, welling-up, exploding, overwhelming everything.
9. Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism* (New York: Norton, 1979). Both Lasch's and my concepts of narcissism are roughly based on Otto Kernberg, *Borderline Conditions and Pathological Narcissism* (New York: Jason Aronson, 1975).
10. Ellen Moers, *Literary Women* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor, 1977), 140-151.
11. The use of mythic types of fantasies to justify the parental behavior is discussed in Dorothy Block, "*So the Witch Won't Eat Me*," (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1978).
12. The slave creatures in *This Island Earth* are examples of the fusion of inside/outside and insect/human while the last apparition of the monster in *Alien*—with its spring-mounted iron maw—is an example of the fusion of flesh and machine, as is the alien's stranded spaceship.
13. Robert Rogers, *A Psychoanalytic Study of the Double in Literature* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1970).
14. *I Married a Monster from Outer Space* belongs to a subgenre of space-possession films including *Invasion of the Body Snatchers, It Conquered the World, They Came from Beyond Space, Creation of the Humanoids, Man from Planet X, Invaders from Mars, Phantom from Space, It Came from Outer Space, Killers from Space*, etc. Depending on the specific context of the film, the possessed earthlings in these films can be examples of either spatial or temporal fission. For an interpretation of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, see my "You're Next" in *The Soho Weekly News*, Dec. 21, 1978.
15. Daniel Dervin, "The Primal Scene and the Technology of Perception In Theater and Film," in *Psychoanal. Rev.*, 62, no. 2, 278, 1975.
16. In regard to shape-changing figures, like werewolves, it is important to note that metamorphosis in and of itself does not indicate a fission figure. Vampires readily shed human form to become bats and wolves; yet vampires are not fission figures. They are allotropic, varying their physical properties while remaining the same in substance. But with werewolves the change in shape betokens a change in its nature.

Another, though connected, difference between werewolves and vampires hinges on the issue of will. Werewolves—most often futilely—resist their fate while vampires, especially Dracula, prefer theirs. This is a crucial reason for having the two different myths.

17. Sigmund Freud, *The Problem of Anxiety* (New York: Norton, 1963), 39.
18. The spider, of course, has polyvalent associations. It figures importantly as a phobic object because of its ruthlessness—i.e., its use of a trap, its oral sadism—it sucks its prey, and, for men, because of its sexual practices—some female spiders feast upon their mates. In much of the psychoanalytic literature the spider is correlated with the oral, sadistic mother; its body is asso-

ciated with the vagina; its legs are sometimes glossed as the fantasized penis that the mother is believed to possess. Some references concerning spider imagery include: Karl Abraham, "The Spider as a Dream Symbol" in *Selected Papers*, trans. Douglas Bryand and Alix Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1927); Ralph Little, "Oral Aggression in Spider Legends," *Amer. Imago* 23: 169-180, 1966; R. Little, "Umbilical Cord Symbolism of the Spider's Dropline," *Psychoanal. Quart.*; Richard Sterba, "On spiders, hanging and oral sadism," *Amer. Imago* 7: 21-28. There is also an influential reading of "Little Miss Muffet. . . ." in Ella Freeman Sharpe, "Cautionary Tales," *Int'nat. J. of Psychoanal.* 24: 41-45. In the preceding text I have also connected spiders to masturbation. I have done this not simply because spiders somewhat resemble hands but because that resemblance itself is part of our literary culture. Recall the legend of Arachne who was punished by Minerva by being reduced to a hand which becomes a spider. Bulfinch writes that Minerva sprinkled Arachne "with the juices of aconite, and immediately her hair came off and ears likewise. Her form shrank up, and her head grew smaller yet; her fingers cleaved to her side and served for legs. All the rest of her is body, out of which she spins her thread, often hanging suspended from it, in the same attitude as when Minerva touched her and transformed her into a spider." Thomas Bulfinch, *Mythology* (N.Y.: Dell Publishing Co., 1959), 93.

19. Some typical science fiction plots are outlined in the opening of Susan Sontag's "The Imagination of Disaster" in *Film Theory and Criticism* (N.Y.: Oxford U. Press, 1979). Sontag's first model plot is like the Discovery Plot described in this paper. However, the problem with Sontag's variant is that she does not give enough emphasis to the drama of proving the existence of the monster over skeptical objections. This, I feel, is the crux of most horror/sci-fi films of the Discovery Plot variety.

20. The theme of knowing/not knowing is important to horror films along many different dimensions. In terms of cinematic technique, it can influence the director's choice of formal strategies. For example, in recent horror films, there is a great deal of use of what I call unassigned camera movement in the context of stories about demons, ghosts and other unseen but all-seeing monsters. In *The Changeling*, the camera begins to move around George C. Scott in his study. It is not supplying new narrative information nor is its movement explicitly correlated within the scene to any specific character. It has no assignment either in terms of narrative or characterological function. But it does call attention to itself. The audience sees it. And the audience cannot help postulating that the camera movement *might* represent the presence of some unseen, supernatural force that is observing Scott for devilish purposes. The point of the camera movement is to provoke the spectator into a state of uncertainty in which he/she shifts between knowing and not knowing.

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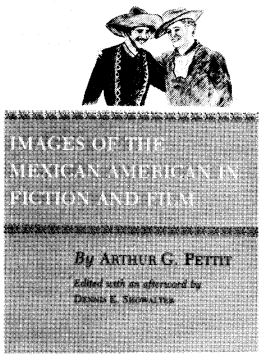

Images of the Mexican American in Fiction and Film

***By* ARTHUR G. PETTIT**
***Edited with an afterword by* DENNIS E. SHOWALTER**

From the beginnings of Anglo-Mexican interaction, Anglos have felt physical, cultural, and moral superiority. Pettit says shifts in these attitudes have meant only variations in the use of stereotypes.

The author examines more than one hundred years of popular writing and nearly seventy years of movies in this study of the response of American popular culture to the Mexican American as reflected in Anglo fiction and film.
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MARSHA KINDER

From The Life of the Marionettes to The Devil's Wanton:

BERGMAN'S CREATIVE TRANSFORMATION OF A RECURRING NIGHTMARE

From the Life of the Marionettes, made in Munich with a German cast, proves that Ingmar Bergman is capable of artistic growth when working outside his native Sweden. This latest masterpiece brings to full expression—both narratively and visually and in the most intense, highly concentrated form —a murderous nightmare that runs throughout his canon. The emotional and aesthetic power of this stunning film are best appreciated when seen in the context of his entire body of work.

Recurring nightmares have four crucial functions in the films of Ingmar Bergman. First, they provide germinal images for the creation of specific films. Bergman claims the nightmare of humiliation that opens *Naked Night* and the haunting image of women in white drifting through red rooms that lies at the center of *Cries and Whispers* were based on his own dreams. When he adapts these images to his films, they are not necessarily limited to dream sequences, but provide the central thread out of which the entire film is spun.

Second, recurring nightmares control the structure of many key films. For example, the journeys of self-exploration in *Wild Strawberries* and *Face to Face* are controlled by a series of nightmares which help the rational doctors, Isak Borg and Jenny Isaksson, break through their constraining personae and confront their fear of death.

Third, the recurring nightmares unify Bergman's canon and illuminate his process of artistic growth. The repetition of images, faces, names, and situations enables his films to be seen as variations of the same recurring nightmare. They struggle with the same impulses, juggle the components into new configurations, but never escape the repetition compulsion. When he was making his trilogy, Bergman took an important step toward dissolving the boundaries between nightmares and their surrounding reality. "In the middle of the picture *Through a Glass Darkly* when Karin stands at the seaside and says three times, 'Here comes the rain,': that's the exact feeling of dreams, and then everything turns over. You stop watching from the outside and become part of the madness inside."[1] The nightmare becomes insanity when the dreamer no longer maintains the boundaries with waking reality. Earlier in *The Magician* (1958) this idea was verbalized by the scientist when he was terrorized by the surreal trickery of the mute illusionist. Trying to maintain control, he reasoned: I'm either dreaming or insane, since I can't be insane, then I must be dreaming so all I have to do is wait until I awaken. Once Bergman reaches *The Silence* (1963), the third work in the trilogy, his characters never awaken, for the entire film represents a nightmare from which there is no escape. Bergman became fully aware of this structural shift a few years later. "Suddenly about a year ago while making *Hour of the Wolf,* I discovered that all my pictures were dreams. Of course I understood that some of my films were dreams, that part of them were dreams. . . . But that *all* my pictures were dreams was a new discovery to me."[2]

This realization made new relations possible among films. For example, black and white footage from *Shame* becomes a nightmare within *The Passion of Anna,* which itself is an anxiety dream

An earlier version of this essay was delivered as a paper on November 20, 1980 at a symposium entitled "The Anxious Subject: Nightmares and Daymares in Literature, Art and Film," organized by Moshe Lazar at USC.

in color, reworking the same dream thoughts. Although Bergman recently reported that he looks at a film for the last time three or four years after it's released, makes notes on what he likes and dislikes, and then pushes it out of his mind forever,[3] each new work seems to grow out of the previous ones and each leaves an indelible mark on his creative development. This complex interweaving extends from his latest film *From the Life of the Marionettes* all the way back to his cinematic debut in the forties.

Finally, the acting out of recurring nightmares is therapeutic both for Bergman and his audience. It's presented as an artistic and phenomenological alternative to psychoanalysis—like the Gestalt technique of dream re-enactment. This is most clear in *Face to Face,* where the protagonist Jenny is a psychiatrist who experiences a psychotic break. In several ways this film is a continuation of *Through a Glass Darkly.* The titles of both films come from the same biblical quotation, revealing the focus on the two-way search for the self, from within and without: "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." In both films the journey into madness is triggered by the same germinal image—a woman staring at the patterned wallpaper. This image was based on an actual childhood experience that Bergman had when he (like Jenny) lived with his grandmother; he intended to include it much earlier in *The Devil's Wanton,* but omitted it because he could not make it work artistically or phenomenologically. In *Face to Face,* when Jenny visits her grandmother, ironically the old woman says: "I've put you in Karin's room. You won't be disturbed there."

Actually Jenny condenses the mad wife Karin and the rational doctor/husband Martin from *Through a Glass Darkly.* Although she begins as a "mentally illiterate" psychiatrist who has never taken "extended reality seriously," Jenny continues Karin's descent into madness, providing us with an even closer look from the inside. Karin's brother Minus, who is unsure of his sexuality and whom she draws into incest and insanity, prefigures Tomas in *Face to Face*—the homosexual gynecologist whose mad sister doubles as Jenny's patient and Shadow. In contrast to Tomas, whose rescue of Jenny is based on his own experience of attempting suicide, Jenny's psychiatric colleague is of no help: "Twenty years ago I realized the inconceivable brutality of our methods and the complete bankruptcy of psychoanalysis. I don't think we can really cure a single human being." This doubt is echoed by the psychiatrist in *Marionettes:* "We're phenomenal at wiping out people's identities . . . no self, no fear." Before attempting suicide in *Face to Face,* Jenny defines her own condition, not in analytic terms, but experientially: "The dividing line between my outer behavior and my inner impoverishment has become more distinct. . . . We're gradually suffocated without knowing what is happening. At last there's only a puppet left. . . . Inside there is nothing but a great horror." Although her nightmares are terrifying, at least they put her in touch with her actual feelings. When she awakens in the hospital, Tomas offers her an incantation for those who don't believe: "I wish that someone or something would affect me so that I can become real."

This is precisely the effect of Bergman's movies. Some might argue: but I'm not neurotic like Bergman and his sick marionettes! He counters with rational characters—the scientist in *The Magician,* the doctor/husband in *Through a Glass Darkly,* and Jenny in *Face to Face*—who demonstrate that those who cling to their personae are the ones in greatest danger of breakdown and victimization. In the Preface to the screenplay of *From the Life of the Marionettes,* Bergman says the central question is: "Why does a short-circuit reaction occur in a person who is in every way well adjusted and well established? *Face to Face* dealt with a similar

The loving gesture before the eruption of violence ▶

theme." All of his films imply there is no easy way out for anyone; that's why they are so threatening.

The most terrifying nightmare that recurs in Bergman's work is one where the dreamer commits murder; it always evokes the relationship between parent and child. In the rest of this essay, I want to trace this murderous nightmare through three key films in Bergman's canon: *The Devil's Wanton, The Hour of the Wolf,* and *From the Life of the Marionettes.* I have chosen *The Devil's Wanton,* also called *Prison* and made in 1948/49, because it marked Bergman's debut as an auteur and contains the seeds of everything he was to develop in his later works.

The choice of *The Hour of the Wolf,* begun in 1966 and released in 1968, was made for several reasons. It marks the turning point when Bergman realized that all his films were dreams. Of all his films, it is closest to the horror genre, merging his personal nightmare with the cultural archetype. It's his first film to foreground the "Hour of the Wolf" motif, which reworks the werewolf and Little Red Riding Hood myths that imprinted Bergman as a child. He admits, "This cannibal motif, the hour of the wolf, goes back a long way."[5] Finally, it's a problematic work frequently attacked as being "insane" or out of control.[6] Yet it was made around the same time as *Persona,* one of his masterpieces. Originally he intended to make it the year before *Persona* when he wrote a script called *The Cannibals.* It's a work he delayed, revised, and was never satisfied with; it clearly reveals his struggle to master this material.

The following patterns appear in all three films: (1) the hour of the wolf motif, (2) the use of a frame as a form of secondary revision, and (3) the three-stage revelation of the nightmare: the first stage, a bracketed theatrical insert, which displaces the nightmare by presenting it in a different mode or tone; the second stage, a verbal account of the dream; and the third stage, a visualization. By tracing these patterns through the three films, we will see how Bergman gains greater control over the materials, how he intensifies his use of condensation, how he shifts from coded surrealistic visuals to a richer phenomenological experience of the dream, how he moves his audience from an external observation and analysis of the events to a fuller participation inside the hallucination.

THE HOUR OF THE WOLF MOTIF

Bergman's early experience with the hour of the wolf is associated with his puppet theater and magic lantern. He says: "The devil was an early acquaintance, and in the child's mind there was a need to personify him. This is where my magic lantern came in . . . Red Riding Hood and the Wolf, and all the others. And the wolf was the Devil . . . with a tail and a gaping red mouth . . . a picture of wickedness and temptation on the flowered wall of the nursery."[7] In Bergman's version of the fairy tale, the color red unites killer and victim as two faces of evil, which merge into the patterned wallpaper.

The werewolf myth is the story of the Shadow killer. Under the influence of the moon goddess, the good man is transformed into a wild animal, ready to devour his loved ones. Robert Louis Stevenson's version, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,* was also based on an actual nightmare. In all three films by Bergman, an essentially good man—the poet Tomas in *Devil's Wanton,* the artist Johan Borg in *Hour of the Wolf,* the businessman Peter Egerman in *Marionettes*—longs to murder his wife and commits suicide. The hour of the wolf is the time when the murderous impulses take over. Johan defines it most precisely: "This hour is the worst. . . . The old folks call it the hour of the wolf. It's the hour when most people die. It's the hour when most children are born. Now is when nightmares come to us. And if we are awake . . . we are afraid."

In Little Red Riding Hood, it is the grandmother who is transformed into the wolfish killer, and her gaping red mouth is the primary object of terror. These images are most explicit in *Face to Face,* where Jenny is dressed like Little Red Riding Hood in her nightmares and confronts a demonic version of her grandmother whose "face looked like a mad dog that was about to bite." The color red is most intense in *Cries and Whispers,* which contains a flashback to the childhood memory of the magic lantern. These two myths are reverse sides of the same cannibalistic fear—of devouring the mother, or being devoured by her gaping red

mouth. That's why Bergman's murderous nightmare always evokes the relationship between parent and child. These two myths are also associated with two developmental stages, both crucial to the child's emerging sexuality. The story of Red Riding Hood suggests the infantile oral stage where the harmonious union with the loving mother is disrupted by the development of ego boundaries, leading to a desperate power struggle between the child's ravenous hunger and the mother's dominating will. The werewolf myth is linked with adolescence, when the teenager discovers strong sexual urges at the same time that the body undergoes a physical transformation, including the growth of body hair.

In *The Devil's Wanton,* the werewolf and Red Riding Hood myths are separated into two plots but united in the central nightmare. The werewolf is the drunken poet Tomas, who talks about the hour of midnight "when even children sound cruel." He loses the boundaries between reality and hallucination, believing that he has actually murdered his wife; he brings a policeman to search for her body in a closet (the very place where the grandmother is hidden in Red Riding Hood), but discovers it was only a nightmare. In the second plot the young prostitute Birgitta (with whom Tomas falls in love) doubles as Red Riding Hood and the grandmother. Victimized by her cruel older sister and her lover/pimp named Peter, she lets them take her child and destroy it. At the beginning of her dream, Birgitta walks through a forest of people (an image repeated in *Face to Face*) and is given a jewel by her mother, who appears as a fairy godmother. Then the dream becomes a nightmare as she experiences two violent transformations that reveal emotional truths which ultimately lead her to suicide. Tomas is transformed into her sadistic customer Alf; she realizes that, like Peter, this lover is another potential killer. She drowns a doll, which transforms into a fish—an image that forces her to confront her own complicity in the infanticide. The nightmare reveals Birgitta to be both victim and killer.

In *Hour of the Wolf* all boundaries—between the two myths, between waking reality and dream, sanity and hallucination—completely dissolve. Just before Johan defines "the hour of the wolf," we see Alma and Johan walking through a forest with a full moon low in the sky; the hour affects even the placid Alma, who for the first time erupts into anger and threatens to leave Johan. Later, we watch close-ups of their faces illuminated by a match as Johan describes a painful memory of a childhood punishment, where he is locked in a closet, which supposedly contains a devilish little man who would bite off his toes. When he begged for release and admitted his guilt, he was beaten by his father and then forgiven by both parents and allowed to kiss their hands (like the gift of the jewel). A similar punishment is described in *Face to Face,* but there administered by a severe grandmother. This closet image can be traced back to the scene in *The Devil's Wanton* where Tomas takes the policeman (a substitute father) to search for the corpse of his wife (a substitute mother).

Following this narration, Johan describes to Alma another event, which he presents as a confession of an actual deed but which we interpret as a nightmare or hallucination, partly because of the style in which it is visualized. In the midst of this very dark movie, we suddenly see a sequence that is flooded in a harsh over-exposed light, which Bergman describes as "strong, unmoving sunlight that is always most frightening" and which dominates his "cruellest dreams." In this nightmare Johan bashes in the head of a seductive child who tries to bite him and then submerges his body in water, like the drowning of the baby in Birgitta's nightmare. Johan's two narratives reveal that he, like Birgitta, is both killer and victim; he identifies both with the brutalized child and with the closeted demon—a pattern that exactly fits the sado-masochistic dynamic in the homosexual male, as delineated by Freud, and which is explicitly verbalized by the psychiatrist in *Marionettes.*

The transformation into the werewolf is most fully realized in a powerful hallucination, which absorbs and further compresses the previous narratives. It begins with Johan's shooting of his wife Alma, an act which totally bursts reality and transports him into his inner chamber of horrors, which is dominated by ominous birds, elongated shadows, and spatial disorientations. He meets the devouring woman (called Mother in the original story) who, in the midst of eating, makes him kiss her toes, reminding us of the closet demon and the for-

giving mother; he watches the ominous grandmother peel off her face as if to expose a wolf, saying: "I must take my hat off, then I'll hear better"—a remark that echoes "the better to hear you with" from Red Riding Hood; he is costumed and made-up by the ominous puppeteer, who functions here as a demonic director; finally, he reaches Veronica Vogler who lies on a slab like a corpse. When he runs his hand along her flesh, it's as if he is totally possessing it. Johan's erotic pleasure is interrupted when she awakens with hysterical laughter; when he turns to see the vampirish demons watching from the ceiling, his own face is transformed by the smeared make-up and the surge of hatred into that of a leering wolf. Suddenly aware of his total descent into madness, he says: "I've reached the limit—the glass has been shattered." This moment is underscored musically by a blaring tone that sounds like the howl of a wolf and visually by a slow dissolve to water, and the boy's head bobbing up from the earlier nightmare, fusing the impulses of murder and lust. At the end of the film, we are not sure whether Johan has been totally devoured by his demons in the woods or whether he has committed suicide; we only know that he has disappeared from the island, leaving Alma wounded, impregnated, and imprinted by his madness.

From the Life of the Marionettes further compresses all of these elements into the opening color sequence, in which we see a man murder and sodomize a woman in an underground pornographic theater that is flooded in strong unmoving light, enclosed by red walls, and saturated in red brocade. The first image is a close-up of a woman's face. A man enters the frame, laying his head on her shoulder and saying softly, "I'm tired." She gently replies, "You must sleep now," and lovingly caresses his face with her hands. He erupts into fury, knocks her down, and in the struggle we see that she is bare-breasted, wearing only a choker necklace, red panties, red shoes and black stockings. She runs to hide in a closet, but he breaks in like a demon. Then she flees to a red theater, where he chokes her to death. During the actual killing we see only her legs going limp. As he lays her lifeless body on the red brocade and begins to rape her, the color drains out of the image.

Seen from the context of the rest of the film and the rest of Bergman's canon, we realize that every detail in the *mise en scène* contributes to the murder. The cruel light is as much to blame here as it was in Camus's *The Stranger.* The man's opening line, "I'm tired," has been used both with his wife and mother. The victim's gestures of touching his face and suggesting that he sleep duplicate his wife's earlier attempts to console him during a sleepless hour of the wolf. This gesture and phrase are also typically used by a mother to quiet and control a demanding child before abandoning him to the solitude of his room. We gradually realize that the victim, a prostitute named Katerina, substitutes for the murderer's mother and wife, who is also called Katerina; she also condenses Alma and Veronica Vogler from *Hour of the Wolf* and Tomas's wife and the young mother/whore Birgitta from *The Devil's Wanton.* The murderer similarly condenses Birgitta's three lovers—the violent husband Tomas, the sadistic customer Alf, and her lover/pimp Peter—a trio whose unity was revealed in her nightmare.

In the Preface to the *Marionettes* screenplay, Bergman traces the names Peter and Katerina to the married couple—"two furious and disastrous persons"—who are minor characters in *Scenes from a Marriage.* Of all his works, *Scenes* is the most devoted to ordinary reality (though it contains a powerful nightmare sequence) and the most sympathetic to women and their growth.[9] Yet *Marionettes,* the most advanced into dreams, reveals the greatest hostility toward assertive women. Peter and Katerina are also the names of the participants in the beach orgy described by Alma in *Persona.* It is characteristic of Bergman to take minor characters from one work and transform them into protagonists of another film in a different mode; he follows the same pattern with the psychiatrist from *Persona* who becomes Jenny in *Face to Face.*

The rest of *Marionettes,* in black and white, is logically divided into eleven scenes, all dated and labeled, that occurred either before or after the catastrophe. This structure is similar to the numbered and labeled scenes in *The Rite,* an anagogic nightmare which also contains rape and murder. In *Marionettes* the labeled scenes range from Peter and the whore fifty minutes before the murder, to a psychiatrist's "definitive summary" of the

event four weeks later. Both of these scenes immediately precede an epilogue, also in color, showing Peter in an insane asylum, where his behavior is described by a nurse to his visiting wife, whom he refuses to see (a sexual reversal of the situation in *Persona*). The labeled scenes function in relation to the opening sequence exactly the way the rest of Bergman's canon illuminates any specific film. Although the scenes are supposed to explain the catastrophe, they offer multiple perspectives that further complicate the reality. We watch Peter struggling in a deceptive marriage and dictating a deadening business memo; we witness his visits to his mother and psychiatrist, both of whom are interviewed by an investigator.

The investigator is seen only when he interviews Tim, who is one of the most illuminating characters in the film. The homosexual business partner of the wife Katerina, he is the one who introduced Peter to the murder victim. Like Tomas the homosexual doctor in *Face to Face,* Tim is suffering from a recent rejection by a young lover and is a survivor of the same hidden forces that overwhelm the protagonist. He calls them "two incompatibles. The dream of nearness, tenderness, fellowship, self-forgetfulness—everything that's alive. And on the other side—violence, filthiness, horror, the threat of death. At times I think it is one and the same urge." Like Peter, he feels both hostility and affection for his partner Katerina. In two consecutive scenes, we watch him bare his inner emotional life, each time claiming that's only half the truth, as if the layers of masking and revelation are limitless. In one shot he sits before a mirror confronting his divided self, both images equally authentic. This composition reveals not only his narcissism, of which he is aware, and his function as the homosexual double for Peter, but also his acceptance of multiple reality. As he pulls at his face as if it were a rubber mask, he exposes the material base for the werewolf myth—the terrifying transformation that results from aging and that widens the gap between the view of the self from within and without: "When I shut my eyes I feel like a 10-year-old and then when I open them, there stands a little old man, a childish old man." Like Tomas, his implicit incantation is, "Let me be real." Like Tomas, he is presented as an alternative to a psychiatrist who, as Bergman says in his Preface, "should be nearest to understanding . . . but is farthest away." Dr. Jensen tries to seduce Peter's wife and interprets the murder as the displacement of aggression toward a possessive mother committed by a latent homosexual. It's not that this interpretation is wrong, but merely that it's reductive and partial. Although Bergman acknowledges that the psychoanalytic framework describes the dynamics in his films, he seriously questions its powers of illumination.

Actually the most illuminating scenes are those that come closest to re-enacting the opening sequence. They include two versions of the recurring fantasy of killing his wife, both addressed to the psychiatrist Jensen and both omitting the act of murder. In the first version, though Peter is verbally confessing his murderous obsession, the visualization remains beautiful and highly filtered. The germinal images are bright sunlight and silence. We see an overexposed image of Peter asleep in the foreground, while Katerina moves like a ghost in the background out of focus. The image dissolves to a screen through which he watches her combing her hair as he describes how he loves to watch her move. In both shots she is subdued and controlled. But then we see a huge close-up of her face staring directly into the camera, while Peter tells us she is looking in the bathroom mirror directly at him, knowing he has a razor in his hand ready to slit her throat, yet still smiling. He says: "I can feel the pulse in her throat." Both the image and the dialogue evoke the violent, loving encounter between actress and nurse in *Persona,* where they strike a similar loving pose in grey light and where Alma says while examining Elisabeth's

Katerina smiles when she sees the knife in Peter's hand, retaining the pristine beauty of the dream ▶

face, "I can see the pulse in your neck, you've got a little scar there too." As in the earlier film, here the violence is checked. Dr. Jensen interrupts the fantasy by drawing the camera back to his office and describing the amount of blood that would be shed and that would stain the pristine whiteness of the vision. Like Peter's waking experience, the visualized fantasy remains alienated from his strongest drives.

In the second version, described in a letter that was never sent, the visualization is far more powerful and original. It begins with a white fade that dominates the visuals, though the screenplay reveals that the sequence was originally intended to be in color. As Vlada Petric has pointed out, Bergman shot it on color stock and had it printed in black and white, a process which enabled him to attain an extraordinary ethereal whiteness in this sequence. Bergman recently observed in an interview: "Perhaps black and white is better, because color is never true. In black and white, you create the color itself. Fantasy is created with black and white."[10] First we see a huge close-up of part of Peter's face as he describes the experience. When he tells us it was no ordinary dream, "I dreamed I was asleep," we see a very realistic overhead shot of Peter and Katerina sleeping in their bed; it looks exactly like one of the time-lapse photos of recent laboratory studies of body positions during sleep. Later when Peter says, "I dreamed I was dreaming," transforming the mode into a lucid dream, we see a similar overhead shot, but this time they are naked and set against a white shimmering surface that has no boundaries. He describes it as a closed space, perhaps a sphere, which creates the sensation of floating. The size of their bodies and the selection of details keep changing, always linked by dissolves and white fades. As he runs his hands along her body, an image that is reminiscent of the necrophiliac eroticism between Johan and Veronica in *Hour of the Wolf*, Peter says: "I felt a direct connection between my brain and . . . fingertips, on every finger I had an eye." When we cut back to the close-up of the narrating Peter, he totally accepts the dream and its contradictions: "A thought floated like a ribbon through my mouth. If you are death, then welcome my death. If you are life, then welcome my life." This acceptance allows him to reach the next stage of lucidity, for now he dreams that he awakens out of deep sleep, perhaps heading for a night terror. He knows it is still a dream and that the only danger is to be afraid, or to scream. He tries to waken Katerina but can't reach her; he finds her "soft and indifferent in an exciting way." When she does awaken and smile at him, he feels an insane rage—as if he has lost control of the fantasy. As in *Hour of the Wolf*, they move their lips but we don't hear their words; violence erupts in slow motion in the white glare. As he looks at her, the camera moves into a tight shot of his eye before fading to white. Then there is a moment of tenderness where they embrace, striking the pose of the *pietà* that Bergman used earlier in *Cries and Whispers*. When the image returns to a close-up of Peter as narrator, there is another abrupt shift. He says, "Then it happened all at once, Katerina was dead." We see a brief flash of her lying on the floor with blood spilled from her slit throat and Peter standing behind her, almost fading into the whiteness. Then the image turns quickly to the safer reality of Peter awakening in his bedroom while Katerina sleeps on, as he asks the psychiatrist in a voice-over: "Am I in fact alive or was the dream . . . my one brief moment of life—of conquered and experienced reality?" In this nightmare he moves closer to a fusion of word and image, of inner feeling and outward action, of the contradictory realities described by Tim.

Peter takes the next step toward violence in the following sequence where he attempts suicide after an argument with Katerina. In his first visit to Dr. Jensen, Peter had described his violent marital quarrels in theatrical terms: "It's all like a play with the lines rehearsed . . . though the lack of an audience is fatal." In the suicide scene he stages a dress rehearsal for the murder, even arranging for a male friend to be present as audience. In an upside-down facial closepup (a recurring shot in *Persona*), Katerina describes the sexual origin of their fight: Peter tried to sodomize her but failed, she laughed, he became furious and tried to choke her. Making his exit from the scene, Peter proclaims with deliberate melodrama: "What a handsome couple you two would make," and then adds unexpectedly, "when Christ was on the cross, he said, Woman, behold thy son! Son, behold

thy mother." One suspects Peter learned his theatrics at his mother's knee.

In scene after scene we constantly return to the image of mother and child. In the grainy flashback to Peter's last visit to his mother, their embrace is captured in a freeze frame. Although she tells the investigator that Peter had a happy childhood, she actually reminds us of the motherhood story from *Persona.* A famous actress like Elisabeth Vogler, she gave up her career for her husband and children; yet, as her daughter-in-law observes, she is still terribly self-centered and remains "a decaying monument to her husband's god-damned tyranny." The mother looks like an older version of Katerina, with whom she aggressively competes for control over Peter.

The final step toward murder occurs when Peter enters the pornographic theater 50 minutes before the catastrophe. The sequence opens with a startling assault on our senses—a writhing nude body doing bumps and grinds to sensual punk rock. We recognize images from the previous nightmares—the glaring lights, the familiar gestures and phrases, the disturbing smells and Peter's fear. On one of the walls we see an unexpected picture of a mother and baby. We share Peter's feeling of entrapment for we know all the repetitions are leading inevitably to murder. The narrative structure reaffirms Peter's refrain: "All roads are closed." What we see dramatized so powerfully is that Peter and the whore play exactly the same power games he has played with all females; he wants to direct a passive woman and becomes impotent as soon as she shows signs of life. Although Dr. Jensen says that with the prostitute "suddenly everything was possible," the repetitions imply precisely the opposite. Although this scene is the prelude to the murder, the actual killing is not repeated. Bergman forces us to experience the repetition compulsion from the inside. We have a strong urge to see the opening climax again, realizing that when we first experienced it we didn't understand what was happening. It almost becomes an erotic frustration. The murder remains an elusive nightmare partially remembered and beyond our reach. As the wife Katerina says of their former reality, "What has been can never return . . . it's gone like a dream."

Katerina and Tim bare their inner horrors

THE FRAME

In most of his films Bergman uses a dramatic frame, as if to control the extended reality or as a form of secondary revision. Yet in the earlier films it doesn't always work.

In *The Devil's Wanton* the frame defines madness as a source of artistic inspiration: a professor, just released from an asylum, goes to a director with an idea for a movie—a vision of hell on earth controlled by an anarchistic Devil, showing that "life is a cruel but seductive path between birth and death." At the end of the film, the director decides *not* to make such a movie because the questions it raises are too dangerous: what is the meaning of life? why not suicide? Of course, these are precisely the questions raised by all of Bergman's films, including the two inner stories of Tomas and Birgitta. The frame defines them as two examples of hell on earth and also links them structurally. When Tomas hears of the movie idea, he immediately thinks of Birgitta, whom he has interviewed for an article on prostitution. But in the flashback to the interview, she hides her inner life. Ironically, fictional melodrama proves far more revealing of emotional truth than naturalistic documentary.

In *Hour of the Wolf,* Bergman cut out most of the original frame. "*The Hour of the Wolf* is extremely personal. So personal I even made a prelude and a postlude of it, playfully 'boxing it in.' Nothing is left of this but the dialogue which accompanies the titles. In this prologue and epilogue I was guilty of a self-deception. It

was better not to play at any aesthetic games to hold this film at a distance. So I took these two bits away in two stages."[11] Despite this omission, the interview of the wife Alma remains as another frame. As in the interview with Birgitta, the truthfulness of documentary cinema is subverted, for Alma reveals very little and is cut off in midsentence while questioning the interviewer. What is most revealing is her face, which is captured in one long take and carefully studied in the final close-up. Bergman is still dissatisfied with the remaining frame.

> "The difficulty with the picture is that I couldn't make up my mind who it was about. Had I made it from her point of view it would have been very interesting. But no, I made it the wrong way. After it was finished, I tried to turn it over to her; we even reshot some scenes, but it was too late. To see a man who is already mad become crazier is boring. What would have been interesting would have been to see an absolutely sane woman go crazy because she loves the madman she married. She enters his world of unreality, and that infects her. Suddenly, she finds that she is lost. I understood this only when the picture was finished."[12]

In *Marionettes,* Bergman resolves these problems by turning the frame inside out. Only the prologue and epilogue are in the present tense and in full color. Only they enable Peter to escape his marriage, in which he is trapped as a lifeless puppet acting out a charade and which dominates the black-and-white sequences of the interior. Only in the underground theater and the asylum is he able to act out fully his infantile desires and become fully alive, but, like the earlier nightmare, the prologue is only a "*brief* moment of . . . conquered and experienced reality." This idea is expressed visually when the color drains out of the image as soon as the victim is dead, softening the boundary between the prologue and the black and white sequences that follow.

The epilogue of Peter under observation in the asylum also merges with the previous sequence where Dr. Jensen presents his analytical interpretation of the events—a pairing that is bound to suggest the ending of *Psycho.* As we watch a huge close-up of Peter's face, moving to a tight shot of his eye with the color fading in, we are reminded of a similar shot in the nightmare; we hear Jensen saying in voice-over, "Only someone you kill can you possess . . . only someone who kills himself possesses himself entirely." Though incarcerated and alone, Peter has finally gained full possession of his experience. In his barren room, he stands at the window, duplicating a shot from Johan's final hallucination in *Hour of the Wolf.* His only diversions are a chessboard, reminiscent of the death game in *Seventh Seal,* a teddy bear that evokes both the circus bear who is shot as a substitute for suicide and murder in *Naked Night,* and the stuffed bear that hangs inside the automobile which Anna was driving when she killed her husband and child in *The Passion of Anna.* In *Marionettes,* the final image is of the yellow teddybear, a silent puppet that Peter is at last free to dominate in peace.

It is fascinating that the screenplay of *Marionettes* contains no prologue or epilogue: the narrative begins and ends with the psychiatrist, the asylum scene is placed in the center as a poetic interlude, and the murder scene is omitted entirely. While Freud identified secondary revision as a process that operated both within the dreamwork itself (particularly through displacement) and in the subsequent dream report, in both instances it was a censorship mechanism whose primary function was disguise. In *The Devil's Wanton* and *The Hour of the Wolf* the frame functions in this way, as a means of holding the terrifying dream thoughts at a distance, or to use Bergman's phrase, of playfully "boxing them in." But in *Marionettes* the frame does precisely the opposite—it exposes rather than disguises the aggression and sexuality in the latent dream thoughts. This form of creative adaptation is as revealing as Freud's own technique of free association to specific images. In Bergman's creative process, this kind of revelation is always carried much further in the visual adaptation to film than in the verbal adaptation to the screenplay.

THREE-STAGE PATTERN OF REVELATION

The recurring pattern of the three-stage revelation of the nightmare can be seen either as overdetermination or as another instance of secondary revision. In all three films there is a bracketed theatrical insert, which presents the nightmare in a different mode; a verbal narration of the dream; and finally a visualization. While they

seem always to be three versions of the same story, they exhibit varying degrees of displacement and disguise.

In *The Devil's Wanton* all three versions are placed in the center of the film as consecutive scenes, each moving deeper into non-ordinary reality and decreasing the amount of displacement. The insert is a farcical film, which Tomas shows Birgitta and which actually is Bergman's remake of footage he bought as a child for his first projector. It appears again in the opening montage and jarring interruption within *Persona.* This little farce contains the deep structure and many germinal images for the grim stories of Tomas and Brigitta and for Bergman's entire canon. A sleeper/dreamer starts a fire in his bed, an event that brings forth Death and the Devil, who have been hiding in his room. Running from both of them, he goes to his closet where he discovers a killer with a long knife, who functions as a Shadow or closet demon. A policeman enters, seeking the guilty one, but chases both dreamer and killer who pass the knife back and forth. Amidst the chaos a spider is dangled over the bed—an image that prefigures the terrifying vision of a predatory God in *Through a Glass Darkly.* Still fleeing Death and the Devil, the dreamer/Ego, the killer/Id and the policeman/Super-Ego somersault out of three adjacent windows.

Immediately following this interlude, Birgitta narrates a recurring dream to Tomas, which she describes as beautiful and in which her mother gives her a jewel. When we see another version of this dream in the next sequence, it transforms into a nightmare, alerting us to the latent horror in the previous two scenes. Like dreams, Bergman's films teach us to trust visuals over words as more accurate signs of emotional truth. Yet in this early work the visualization of the nightmare is dominated by the same kind of theatrical surreal trickery that was used by the mute illusionist in *The Magician.*

In *Hour of the Wolf* the three-stage revelation contributes significantly to Alma's increasing participation in Johan's madness. In some ways, this film is another version of *Through a Glass Darkly;* it continues to probe madness on the island of Faro, but reverses the roles of the spouses. In the earlier work, we never actually see the mad wife's visions, and this helps to keep both the sane husband and Bergman's audience somewhat removed from the insanity. In *Persona* Bergman reworked the situation; this time the hallucinations are visualized, yet they are the mutual creation of both the "mad" artist Elisabeth Vogler and the "sane" nurse, also named Alma. As in *Hour of the Wolf,* at the end of the film the artist disappears from the island while the camera observes the surviving woman who has absorbed the other's deepest fears—a process that parallels Bergman's imprinting of his audience. Only in *Hour of the Wolf* does one character's visions actually infect another; the verbal and visual accounts of the disturbed artist enable Alma, as well as Bergman's audience, to participate fully in the madness, while the theatrical insert offers a means of escape.

Before the titles, we are informed that this film is based on Alma's verbal account and Johan's diary. Before she sees the first demon, Alma listens to Johan's verbal descriptions and sees his sketches of the cannibals. The demon leads her to take the next step—the reading of Johan's diary, which enables her to visualize three hallucinatory encounters as conventional flashbacks: in the first, the Baron invites the couple to the castle; the second encounter with the teacher introduces Johan's violence; the third meeting is with Veronica Vogler, who is used (like Mozart's "Pamina") as a demonic incantation that lures not only Johan through lust, but also Alma through jealousy. Once Alma accompanies Johan to the dinner party at the castle, she is a full participant in the madness.

This party is the context for the theatrical insert —a puppet show performance of a scene from *The Magic Flute,* which provides an alternate deep structure for Bergman's canon, one in which the forces of Love, Reason and Order triumph over the demonic forces of passion and anarchy. Mozart's celebration of the triumph of harmony makes us all the more painfully aware of Johan's disintegration into madness.[13] Bergman says: "If you distract the audience temporarily from the course of events and then push them into it again, you don't reduce their sensibility and awareness, you heighten it."[14] As in his filmed version of this opera, here he focuses on the faces of the audience; Mozart's music seems to soothe even the demons,

except for the puppeteer. Like a dream-within-a-dream structure, the insert represents an attempt to escape from the most threatening aspect of the nightmare into another reality. Its illusory nature is underlined when the puppet stage is transformed into a live opera; these conflicting realities are linked by a close-up of Alma's face, as if this is her last chance to avoid being overwhelmed by Johan's vision. The opera provides a glimpse of the world outside Johan's madness. Hence the insert functions, not as the inner dream, but as the outer frame. Bergman claims: "It's good for people to be woken up a moment, then drawn back into the drama."[15]

When Johan confesses the murder of the child, both Alma and we in the audience are even more deeply infected by his insane vision—for his murderous images are visually imprinted in our minds. Though he claims it actually occurred, the visual style forces us to interpret the sequence as a nightmare, and the harsh discordant music makes us contrast it with Mozart's harmony from the insert. Again, the words seem least reliable, yet they are essential as a triggering mechanism that releases the visual memory and authenticates its reality. In *Marionettes,* this point is made explicit, when Peter tells the psychiatrist: "So long as I don't utter a word, my anxiety is like a dream." Once he commits murder, there is no longer a need for verbalization. The same is true of Johan in *Hour of the Wolf;* once he shoots his wife, he dispenses with words and moves totally inside the hallucinatory experience—a shift that is signalled not only by surrealistic codes of ominous birds, peeled faces and dislocated eyes, but also by Bergman's cinematic distortion of space and light.

In *Marionettes,* we are presented with two very brief inserts—a fashion show in slow motion and a highly erotic nude dance. Both events have a logical place in the narrative, but their manner of stylistic presentation emphasizes their disruptive nature. Both intrude into the preceding sequence, coming before the label that introduces the scene to which they belong. Both performances reveal women as dehumanized puppets being manipulated by artists, merchants and consumers to communicate sexual fantasies, but they offer a stark contrast. While the fashion show displays the Persona, featuring costumes that express social codes, the nude dance directly exposes and addresses the Id. The comparison raises the question of whether the bracketed insert reveals or disguises the impulses behind the narrative. Of course, this same question is relevant to the theatrical inserts in the two earlier films. Yet in *Marionettes,* it also applies to the opening sequence, which can be seen as another theatrical insert, bracketed by being in color and by being labeled a prologue. On the one hand, this is the only film in which the dreamer fully acts out the impulse to murder in waking life, yet the victim is still a surrogate for the wife and mother. Like the fashion models, nude dancer, and even the stuffed teddy bear and chess pieces in the asylum, she is merely an icon being manipulated by the dreamer. As his fantasies take over his experience, Peter finds he prefers a silent partner—one who is sleeping, or preferably dead.

When Peter's mother tells us that he and his younger sister played with dolls and had a puppet theater, she immediately evokes Bergman's own childhood experience as a precocious puppeteer. This parallel emphasizes that the opening of *Marionettes* is the most highly compressed model for all of Bergman's films—one he almost omitted. All of his works feature his marionettes acting out his violent nightmares in theatrical settings, allowing him to project his dual identification with the ravenous wolf and the ravished child.

NOTES

1. Ingmar Bergman, as quoted in *Introduction to Ingmar Bergman,* a documentary produced for television by Lewis Freedman, 1967.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Arnold Peyser, " 'I am a voyeur': a Conversation with Ingmar Bergman," *L.A. Times* (Sunday, November 23, 1980), Part VI, p. 1.
4. Ingmar Bergman, *From the Life of the Marionettes,* trans. Alan Blair (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), p. vi.
5. Bjorkman, Manns and Sima, *Bergman on Bergman,* trans. Paul Britten Austin (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972), p. 215.
6. See Linda Buntzen and Carla Craig, "Hour of the Wolf: the Case of Ingmar Bergman," *Film Quarterly* (Winter 1976-77), 23-34. John Simon also attacked the film on these grounds at the "Bergman and Dreams" conference held at Harvard University.
7. Ingmar Bergman, "Introduction," *Four Screenplays of Ingmar Bergman,* trans. Lars Malmstrom and David Kushner

(New York: Simon and Shuster, 1960), p. xiv.
8. Ingmar Bergman, "Cries and Whispers," trans. Alan Blair, *New Yorker* (Oct. 12, 1972), p. 55.
9. For a fuller discussion of these images, see my review of *Scenes from a Marriage* in *Film Quarterly* (Winter 1974-75), 48-53.
10. Peyser, *Ibid.*
11. *Bergman on Bergman*, p. 212.
12. Charles Thomas Samuels, "Ingmar Bergman: An interview" in *Ingmar Bergman: Essays in Criticism*, ed. by Stuart M. Kaminsky (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 131-2.
13. For a fuller discussion of Bergman's use of *The Magic Flute*, see Houston and Kinder, *Self and Cinema: A Transformalist Perspective* (Pleasantville, New York: Redgrave Publishing, 1980), chapter 1.
14. *Bergman on Bergman*, p. 222.
15. *Ibid.*

Reviews

THE STUNT MAN

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The premise of *The Stunt Man* adds a layer to this Pirandellian situation. While fleeing across a bridge, Cameron (Steve Railsback), a young Vietnam veteran, tries to hitch a ride on an elegant old Duesenberg car that incongruously begins approaching him, only to be cursed, kicked to the ground, and nearly run over. He bounces a bolt off its windshield in self-defense—and seconds later finds himself in the midst of a World War I movie. It turns out that he has mistaken this movie's stunt driver, Burt, for a homicidal maniac, when all Burt was really trying to do was successfully drive his car into the river below for director Eli Cross's cameras. Now Burt fails to surface, divers can't find his body, and the wily, flamboyant Cross (Peter O'Toole) offers Cameron sanctuary within the movie's cast and crew if he will replace Burt, thus covering them both when the police show up in search of both Cameron and Burt. As Eli doctors footage of the accident and enforces the deception on his team, Cameron starts playing multiple roles, "a stunt man who is an actor who is a character in a movie who is an enemy soldier." On top of which, he remains a fugitive and becomes a lover of Cross's leading lady, Nina Franklin (Barbara Hershey). The craziness of the deception and Eli's Svengaliesque manner soon have him convinced that the director means to make a snuff movie by killing him in a re-enactment of Burt's fatal crash.

The bare bones of this plot may suggest a solemn exercise in separating Reality from Illusion, precisely the tone of the film's source, Paul Brodeur's 1970 novel. In his introduction to *Naked Masks*, a volume of Pirandello's plays, Eric Bentley defines the essence of such Pirandellian constructions:

> . . . reality itself is a maze in which we are lost (only a god can see a maze from above, and the gods are dead) . . . life is absurd, it fills one with nausea and dread and anguish, it gives one the metaphysical shudder, yet, without knowing why, perhaps just because one is *there*, in life, one faces it, one fights back, one cries out in pain, in rage, in defiance . . . and since all living, all life, is improvisation, one improvises some values. Their Form will last until Living destroys them and we have to improvise some more. (Dutton paperback edition, pp xxvii, 381)

The movie reflects this morose existentialism, so much the coin of the contemporary realm that it has long since become a cliché in any formulation. Yet director Richard Rush has abandoned the slogging, depressive tone of the novel in favor of a giddy, euphoric spirit, bursting with comedy, speed, profanity, and the brand of hot-wired action that he learned to serve up while slapping together low budget rip-offs of the latest pop cul-

(New York: Simon and Shuster, 1960), p. xiv.
8. Ingmar Bergman, "Cries and Whispers," trans. Alan Blair, *New Yorker* (Oct. 12, 1972), p. 55.
9. For a fuller discussion of these images, see my review of *Scenes from a Marriage* in *Film Quarterly* (Winter 1974-75), 48-53.
10. Peyser, *Ibid.*
11. *Bergman on Bergman*, p. 212.
12. Charles Thomas Samuels, "Ingmar Bergman: An interview" in *Ingmar Bergman: Essays in Criticism*, ed. by Stuart M. Kaminsky (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 131-2.
13. For a fuller discussion of Bergman's use of *The Magic Flute*, see Houston and Kinder, *Self and Cinema: A Transformalist Perspective* (Pleasantville, New York: Redgrave Publishing, 1980), chapter 1.
14. *Bergman on Bergman*, p. 222.
15. *Ibid.*

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ture fashions for schlockmeisters like American International's Samuel Z. Arkoff (*Psych-Out, The Savage Seven*) and Fanfare Films's Joe Solomon (*Hell's Angels on Wheels*). Someone once called the target audience for such movies "motorcycle morons, drug strip dumb dumbs, and pimply-faced potheads." Yet a few film-makers (far fewer than critics hellbent on unearthing poverty-row auteurs seem to think) learned and honed valuable skills making them: a command of kinetic story-telling, a flair for action set-pieces, the whole range of unpretentious, fringe-of-Hollywood abilities which several more prestigious yet fatally ponderous major studio directors, like Henry King and Stanley Kramer for instance, utterly lacked. Rush managed to smuggle his B-picture predelictions into star-laden projects like *Getting Straight* and *Freebie and the Bean.* Elliott Gould's outrageous orals exam in *Getting Straight,* during which he flips out when his interrogators try to force his agreement that F. Scott Fitzgerald was a latent homosexual, descends from comparable scenes in *Psych-Out,* an early exploration of the hippie scene, during which comedy suddenly tears through solemnity. James Caan and Alan Arkin crashing their police car off a freeway into an apartment building in *Freebie and the Bean* has the same cartoon-like insanity as the climactic battle of the motorpsychos in *The Savage Seven.*

But connoisseurship of directors like Rush often overlooks their usual vice: the inability to make all this mayhem resonate with any kind of meaning. Rush made hash of late-sixties college riots in *Getting Straight,* and *Freebie and the Bean* is finally just noise. On the face of it, putting him together with the "highbrow" convolutions of *The Stunt Man* seemed to promise merely a louder mess than a King or a Kramer might have made, especially given its bloodlessly intellectualized, laborious source, which reads as though Paul Brodeur never spent five seconds on a real movie location. But the meeting of Rush's high-octane style and the novel's metaphysical heaviness liberates them both, from amusing triviality on the one hand and deadly pretentiousness on the other.

Reworking Brodeur's plot extensively, Rush and screenwriter Lawrence B. Marcus (whose previous credits are *Petulia, Justine,* and *Alex and the Gypsy*) try to place us both in and above the Pirandellian maze to which Bentley refers. Sometimes we share Cameron's suspicious, tunnel-visioned responses to Cross and movie-making; sometimes we observe them with bemusement and delight. Their theme is paranoia and, accordingly, they work to keep us triply off-balance throughout the film, wondering if Cross really plans to knock Cameron off, if the cops will penetrate Cameron's disguise, and if Cameron will blow up like the human time bomb that he seems to be. Brodeur's Cameron is AWOL from the bus taking him to boot camp during the war in Vietnam; the movie's hero survived the war ("one hell of a stunt," he says, adding another Pirandellian fillip) and now runs from the authorities for an offense which Rush and Marcus conceal until late in their story.

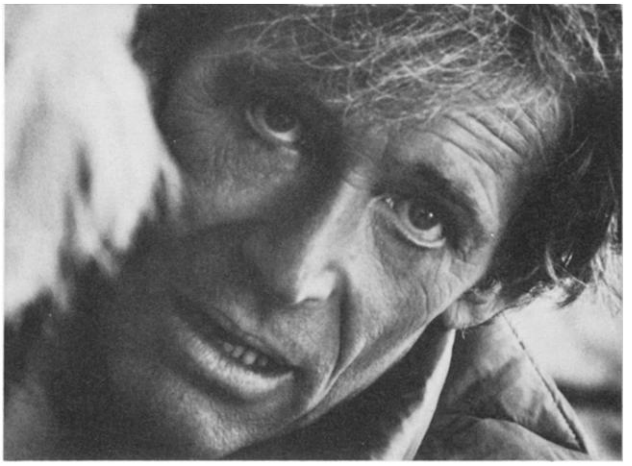
One more of Hollywood's semi-deranged ex-grunts returning home "expecting something . . . a free car wash, triple green stamps" but receiving only hostile indifference, he discovers what *The Stunt Man* turns into a motif: the forgetting of Vietnam. Brodeur kept nudging us in his book with radio bulletins from the front. But when Cameron mentions "gooks" to Cross, he says ironically, "That has a nostalgic ring." Eli's writer Sam (Allen Goorwitz) tells him and us why Eli's war movie is floundering: "Now that they'll let you make an antiwar statement, you haven't got a war. Vietnam is long since gone, and it's too damn late." Eli keeps Cameron around, he says, because Cameron possesses the madness of spirit which he wants to capture on film. Yet his funhouse battle scenes—with biplanes, tinhat soldiers, and camera crews weaving and crashing all over the place—suggest a parody of Vietnam. Unbalanced by his past, spooked by the confusions of trying to shoot a big movie with a swaggering loon at the helm, Cameron starts applying his battlefield credo ("You want to get home for Thanksgiving, you better believe the guy coming at you's trying to kill you") to everyone and everything that he encounters.

This puts him squarely in line with the heroes of movies like *The Parallax View* and *The Formula,* who discover labyrinthine, unbeatable plots (cover-ups of a presidential assassination and the discovery of cheap synthetic fuel, respectively) that sound like paranoid fantasies but turn out to be real. But, unlike these movies and the many others like them which became commonplace in American moviemaking during the past dozen years or so,

The Stunt Man refuses to validate Cameron's fear-ridden vision of life. Instead, it seeks to purge paranoia, from him and from us. Like *Hellzapoppin'*, which features Olson and Johnson amok on a movie set and changing roles one after another with split-second timing, *The Stunt Man* tosses us into movie-making, its heightened image of life in general, the way that Alice's rabbit hole tumbles her into Wonderland. Cameron may get crazy over film-making's sleight-of-hand, but we relish it for the enriching, transforming powers that it shows to us. Eli himself nails down the literary reference when he croons to Cameron, "Have faith, Alice, close your eyes, and enjoy."

A sort of John Huston-as-Pan figure, Cross is the director as guru-Big Daddy-Blessed Trinity. When he first steps from his helicopter, a low camera angle immediately captures his aura by placing his jutting head and brow just in front of the rotors, as though they were a whirly halo. O'Toole acts up a witty storm in his *Lion in Winter* vein, capering and shouting and slipping delicate, even fey inflections into his lines, which Marcus has devised (lifting barely a word from Brodeur) to take full advantage of his mercurial temperament and range. Cross cracks the whip over his colleagues, drives them into frothing rages, psychoanalyzes them, lays manipulative traps for them, in general tries to direct life as though it were a movie. Rush repeatedly drops him into shots dangling serenely, teasingly from his crane, a playful, omniscient Zeus. Nina even complains that she has to doublecheck her shower stall to make sure that he isn't spying on her from beneath the stopper.

But, unlike so many of his real-life counterparts, Eli's string-pulling is not spastic, at least. He gets results, draws the unexpected from saner, more contained people. At first, nonchalantly scattering pages of the script while Sam fumes, he conjures up that fixture of modern Hollywood, the egomaniacal hack who has heard that the auteur theory makes him an artist by virtue of his position, lucked onto a through-the-roof blockbuster his last time out, and now grows infatuated with his writing abilities, even though he can barely sign his name to a deal memo. But then sane, stolid Sam, after fighting off Eli's moonstruck inspirations, suddenly turns up with a porno Victorian bronze of a bear screwing a woman, which he wants to add to a sad, tender gravesite scene.



THE STUNT MAN

Goorwitz's timing as he shyly introduces this idea to Eli and Nina is a small treasure and, when Eli grabs him in delight and howls, "Welcome to the same movie, Sam!" Rush has a comic epiphany. At other times, Eli is crueler. After Nina's strait-laced parents accidentally see footage of her in the nude, Eli takes advantage of this embarrassment to draw an expression of shame from her which he needs for a key shot. The moment bites harder than a comparable scene in *Day for Night* because here the director in question comes across as a genuinely talented, if wildly erratic, filmmaker who really is searching as he shoots, rather than wallowing in his own confusion or just trying to complete his assignment. Even Cameron cannot fight off his fascination with Cross's virtuoso chameleonism. "It's just a crush," somebody coos. That kind of sexual hint runs all through the picture: leading man Raymond Bailey (Adam Roarke) leaping onto Eli after a prank and planting a kiss on his forehead or seeing his double, Cameron, in matching costume and commenting to Eli, "My new cock and balls?"; Chuck, the stunt coordinator (Chuck Bail), measuring Cameron's progress as a stunt man by the clanking of his brass balls; Cameron donning Nina's wig and musing about doubling for her, too. The point isn't weird sex (the film shows none); the sex jokes emblemize the atmosphere of fresh possibilities, new roles that movie-making under a maniac-genius creates.

Oppressed by all this confusion of realms and identities, Cameron seeks something true in his affair with Nina but finds it just as hard to trust her as it is for him to have faith, close his eyes, and enjoy Eli's cinematic circus. He wants to separate her from this kaleidoscopic world, but

she is an actress, in other words a stunt woman of the emotions. When, during her complaint to Eli about privacy, the crew suddenly applauds her anger, she instantly switches to an actressy bow. Enraged at Cameron for not congratulating her after she does a difficult scene and for believing that she has been screwing Eli behind his back, she vents her fury with a mocking imitation of a Southern belle à la Blanche du Bois, instead of lashing out at him in a more direct way. Despite her complaint against Eli and her exploitation at his hands, she clearly relishes just as much as he does the deceptions, the *trompe-l'oeil* devices of movie-making and refuses equally to separate them from "real life."

But the film starts to get fuzzy in dealing with this relationship. Cameron and Nina first meet when he dives into the ocean to rescue a drowning old lady, who turns out to be Nina in disguise, testing her make-up by fooling people into mistaking her identiy. Dumped back into the water by Cameron after she peels off the latex, she makes him carry her ashore even though she's not endangered or disabled, telling him, "I've always wanted to be rescued from something." She strikes this note again a few scenes later when she finds him staring at a rooftop from which he must make a dangerous leap and asks, "You going to rescue the maiden from the tower?" But all this rescue talk doesn't pay off. Since it is Cameron's "real" fear, which she detects beneath the macho strut that Cameron adopts as a defense against Cross, that draws her to him, we must be meant to believe that she is sick to death of the elaborate reality/illusion conundrums of the movie-making life and craves escape with him. Barbara Hershey plays very well against Railsback's jumpy desperation, giving some of her lines a gossamer tenderness, but her part is underwritten. Brodeur's Nina has a garishly unbelievable background, guilt-ridden mistress to a dead, JFK-like president. It is good that Rush and Marcus threw out this moss-covered take-off on Hollywood gossip, but they have not found enough to replace it; their Nina lacks the twisting, turning deviousness that animates Eli and a desperation equal to what Cameron feels. We must take her interest in him mostly on faith.

What partly finesses this weakness, and others, is the film's complex network of references to the techniques of film-making, including its own making. Right at the outset, Rush provides a surrogate for us: the onlookers who watch the shooting of a scene during which a biplane strafes troops on a beach, then begin shrieking at the sight of maimed, decapitated corpses—which briefly fools them and us into thinking that a special effects mishap has turned fake carnage into real. When Eli arouses real shame in Nina, crew members immediately convert it into "reel" shame by placing a scrim behind her which represents a reviewing stand before which her character in Eli's movie, having just received a German decoration, weeps (though the effect is muffled because Rush fails to show us how or why this character reaches this point in Eli's movie). These are just a few examples of how *The Stunt Man* continually makes us aware of the film crew behind the film crew. Everything that we see Eli Cross doing we imagine Rush doing behind him, especially if we know that "Eli Cross" used to be Rush's pseudonym. Hollywood Wisdom claims that this kind of awareness is death at the box office; maybe this is why it took some nine years for Rush to set up this picture and get it distributed by a major. But *The Stunt Man* uses this awareness to heighten pleasure. At the same time, it arouses a skepticism in us akin to Cameron's paranoia. After we have seen Eli trick shame out of Nina for his movie, we cannot help looking back in a new way at earlier moments in *The Stunt Man* which may have amused or moved us, and we perforce become wary of those which follow. Maybe they, too, are fraudulent in this way. Eli uses tricky editing to eliminate Cameron from footage of Burt's crash in order to throw the cops off the scent. Maybe the same tricky editing—for instance, cutting from Cameron crashing inside a stunt plane to Cameron coming inside Nina—also pulled this movie together out of a shapeless morass of rushes; certainly, no film since *The Godfather* was subject to so many rumors of disaster before it was released. These doubts of ours dovetail with Cameron's doubts about the whole situation. When he wonders if what he feels for Nina and she for him is real, so do we. He wonders if they are fooling each other; we wonder if Rush fooled Hershey and Railsback the way Eli fools Nina.

But Rush and Marcus do not have complete control of what they are doing. At a couple of points, their narrative wobbles on its pins. Why

don't the cops suspect Eli's neatly edited version of Burt's crash? Why doesn't one of the stuntmen's organizations get word that Eli is palming off an amateur as a professional and blow the whistle on him? These are, at the very worst, minor, defensible cheats. Cameron's marathon stunt chase across the rooftops is something else. Rush presents it as though it were being shot all at once and in continuity, although the gags include tumbles off heights, riding a collapsible drainpipe down to a pre-rigged awning, crashing through a breakaway glass ceiling, and getting tossed end over end by a horde of boozers in a brothel. Actually, a sequence like this would never be done this way; such an approach would require at least forty cameras (which would probably be unavailable), weeks of preparation and a monster of a budget for extra camera operators. Obviously, Rush knows all this but simply couldn't resist the cockeyed thrill of presenting it this way. Maybe, too, showing it piecemeal, which is how it would be filmed, would have created structural problems, would have failed to catch the sheer gushing force of Cameron's immersion in movie-making, and would have failed equally to make us believe in Eli as a dangerous character, possibly willing to risk the life of a stuntman, Burt earlier, Cameron now.

But this cheating doesn't work, either, for Eli never does seem really dangerous. After a camera assistant wrecks a complicated set-up by calling "Cut" prematurely, Eli flies into a rage and nearly throttles him. Afterwards, this guy tells Cameron that Eli forced him to continue shooting Burt's death throes in the car, but he refused. But Chuck blames the assistant's panic for the lack of usable footage showing Burt underwater in the Duesenberg. And Eli's rage when the assistant yells "Cut" is fully justified. So the ambiguity is not convincing. Similarly, as harsh as Eli's trick on Nina may be, he does not arrange for her parents to view the dailies of her nude scene, as a true Machiavellian would have done. We never quite believe that Eli Cross might kill a stunt man or endanger an actor's emotional balance in order to fulfill his vision. Plenty of directors are this monomaniacal, believing that what reaches the screen, not how it gets there, is all that matters in the end. For all his outrageousness, Eli never quite attains this dark stature, and his failure to do so undercuts the basis for Cameron's terror more and more as the film progresses.

That this proves to be the film's goal makes no difference. Learning that he must indeed re-enact Burt's fatal stunt, Cameron tries to escape, but "movie magic" flings him into the river anyway. At this moment, it seems that all of his worst imaginings have come true. But then everything dissolves in benignity: Cameron escapes from the drowned car, exactly the way Chuck taught him, Nina flies into his arms, and Eli drops down from the sky like Good Daddy. We learn that he never intended to kill or even risk Cameron; no, the whole number was his anti-paranoia therapy for Cameron, whom he has wanted to convince, just as he wants his movie to convince its audiences, that "there's a better way to get home for Thanksgiving." Earlier, when Cameron believes that Nina is two-timing him with Eli, Sam sets him straight. When Nina fears that Cameron committed an unspeakable crime, he tells her that he simply cold-cocked a cop unintentionally with an ice cream bucket, causing him to pass out into the stuff and freeze his nose and ear lobes. Now the ending completes this pattern: Truth, Reality are not phantom, subjective, elusive after all; they are simply hidden, and moreover they are benign. Just dump your distrust, your tunnel-vision, your paranoia, Alice.

No, sorry, unbelievable. We do not need any more of the paranoia which the likes of *The Parallax View* and *The Formula* have been peddling, but *The Stunt Man* gets simplistic in the opposite way, finally. It is as though all enemies were invented and Vietnam ought to be forgotten. Sooner or later, some Marxist will pick up on all this and attack the film as a covert apologia for patriarchal capitalism, even fascism, as personified by Fearless Leader Supershrink Great Auteur Eli Cross. That might be going as far off the deep end as Cameron does, but the thought does intrude, faintly, that Rush is painting a somewhat preening self-portrait by ending *The Stunt Man* this way. Is reality truly this . . . nice? What about those studio executives who bedevilled Rush (to the point of a heart attack)—are they invented enemies? What would Burt say? Come to think of it, did Burt really die? Maybe he escaped after all and swam back to "real life." But that's another movie.

—MICHAEL DEMPSEY

POPEYE

Director: Robert Altman. Script: Jules Feiffer. Cinematography: Giuseppe Rotunno. Music: Harry Nilsson. Producer: Robert Evans. Paramount.

Even for Robert Altman a musical version of Popeye was an odd project, despite *Nashville,* despite Altman's attraction to oddness and to unexpected and diverse genre forms. Perhaps he undertook it in the hope of recouping at the box office, after a string of films that have not fared well commercially (*Buffalo Bill, Three Women, A Wedding, Quintet, A Perfect Couple*). The biggest surprise is that *Popeye* has turned out to be so winning, for all its flaws.

Jules Feiffer's presence as screenwriter must have contributed considerably to the movie's feeling for the venerable comic strip. Popeye, earliest and most longlived of superheroes, first emerged in the Elzie Seger "Thimble Theatre" strip as a subsidiary character in 1929; and Feiffer has written discerningly, in his book *The Great Comic Book Heroes* and elsewhere, about the genre he himself has richly extended. Feiffer must also, despite the conflicts he reports between himself and Altman, have enriched the psychological and archetypal levels of the movie, by all that makes him much more than a cartoonist. Still, Altman is visible everywhere, in the thick complexity of sight and sound, the idiosyncratic humor, the charm, the concern with love, marriage, community. Altman has managed to maintain a comic-book battiness alongside some large resonances—these last just lightly suggested and never pretentious (no small danger for Altman, as *Three Women* and *Quintet* painfully testify).

After a witty allusion to the original cartoon Popeye and to screens within screens, filmic experience playing upon itself, the film opens with Popeye emerging from the sea. At first seen in extreme long shot, he is a tiny barely visible figure in a rowboat, struggling in a vast turbulent sea under an immense glowing sky, riven by lightning and thunder. His pulling in to the zanily ramshackle port of Sweethaven places him immediately in a social world but also underlines his isolation, "orphink" in the world that he is. Altman does the opening processional that he likes so well for introducing a wide panoply of characters, with the clownish citizenry pouring out of their baroquely rotting houses, as Popeye (Robin Williams) makes his goodhumored way into town, stared at and rebuffed on every side as a stranger. He likes the place, though, rents a room in the Oyl household, and gradually gains a child, a woman, a father, a community, and even an enemy whom he can conquer: gains love and respect.

One of the major delights of the film is the texture of it, the aural and visual density and busy stuff that crowds it from start to close. Though filmed on location in Malta, the setting has a surrealist look because of its dramatic land shapes and odd rock formations, brilliantly sun-lit, and its houses and boats, constructed with whimsicality and rickety-looking to the point of imminent collapse. The funhouse characters—in appearance stylized, comically expressionist—are in continual movement through this world, requiring a very fluid camera to keep up with them. As Popeye arrives in town, someone swings perilously back and forth on a pole, Castor Oyl shimmies down another pole, someone ducks behind yet another, a man is chasing his hat, there is a tax man, a key man, a falling piano: a constant barrage of circus-like activity, often overlapping. A thickly bearded man with a foreign accent sells carrots to Popeye, as fat Castor falls down behind them—at the same time that we are trying to pick up all the hard-to-completely-hear wit of the exchange and the clever rhythm of delivery. The Roughhouse Cafe scene is similarly constructed out of a wild series of little jokes surrounding the main action, funny in itself, of Popeye trying to communicate his life's sad story to Wimpy (played by Paul Dooley), who with marvellous singlemindedness is intent on nothing but feeding himself with hamburgers.

Some jokes run the length of the film—like the wild-haired man (hermit? leftover of the sixties?) constantly peeping in through windows, around corners, on the other side of a suddenly opened door, though he never says a word or contributes anything to the action. Of course some of the carefully constructed farcical scenes misfire, are not funny, or go on too long—like Popeye's room collapsing or Bluto interminably tearing up the Oyl house in a jealous rage. Some connections are impossible to make without a second viewing and even then, along with muttered side remarks and little expressions and gestures, are likely to elude one. The style is familiar to us from Altman's

other films; it has become a kind of trademark of his, and where we might have been irritated by what seemed unnecessary obfuscation in the past, here there is instead a sense of playfulness, a profligate generosity, in throwing in a handful of things at a time, absorb them or not.

The general atmosphere of good humor—supported by the presence of appealing songs and music that trade on a wry charm, of a piece with their contexts—is generated particularly by Robin Williams's sweet-tempered and feelingful Popeye. Altman's magic with actors has not let him down in this film. In addition to Shelley Duvall's usual excellence, Altman skillfully taps the gift of voices Williams brings to the role. Through the constant modulations of tone and emotion, and the charmingly idiosyncratic pronunciation of words, a sweetness of character is somehow conveyed, without any of the hysterically frenetic double talk of Williams's TV persona. Altman even manages to give this Popeye an astonishingly bright blueness of eye—a carrot-haired, sun-weathered goodness with no Mork plastic about it in any way. It's an impressive transformation and makes believable that the macho hero of all time, bulging with muscle power, is bashful, gentle, reticent, careful and reluctant in his use of force, and abounding in loving feelings.

But despite the friendliness and courtesy with which Popeye presents himself, he is much put upon. Doors are shut in his face, preposterous taxes are levied, an old lady bashes him for trying to help her. He alone is overlooked at the Oyl dinner table and served no food, as later too at the cafe; he is rejected by the party guests at Olive's engagement party; and of course he gets beaten up by Bluto. His response is generally forebearing, despite muttered objections. "Don't think I blames you, 'cause I don't," he says after the jealous Bluto almost demolishes him. But though he tries to be "nice," after a point he will take no more. He fights the Toughs when he must, although reluctantly, and after decimating them, gently murmurs an apology to the cashier as he—is it civility? docility?—pays his bill. (The added joke is that the bill was handed him at the very moment Wimpy managed to do him out of his much needed burger. He hopes in return for Wimpy's ear but no luck: Popeye keeps paying without getting anything in return.)

Popeye and his villainous enemy Bluto

Olive exacerbates the difficulties, always fuming and complaining, often at him. When Popeye first enters the house, she turns on him for listening to her unavoidable tirade. When she tries to escape her engagement to Bluto by fleeing her own engagement party, from which Popeye was driven away, she attacks him for not being there and thus for not caring about her. Like her cartoon source, whom she miraculously resembles, she is marvellously energetic and endlessly unreasonable. At the same time, Popeye accepts the mistreatment, takes the unjust blame, apologizes. When Olive is not carping, she is worrying—lest he be killed by Oxblood, lest he fall with the baby.

Olive has her tender moments but interestingly, they are almost never directed to the baby, but to the man. All the immense love for the "infink" shown in the film is expressed through Popeye (also, later, through grandfather Pap) who, at the minute he lays eyes on Swee'pea, a foundling in a basket, says he loves him more than he'll ever know. He *is* truly the "mudder" he claims to be. Aside from Popeye, though, fathers are a sorry lot in *Popeye.* Olive's is hidden behind newspapers most of the time, helplessly watching disasters fall, smoldering with a continual sense of grievance but reacting only by demanding an apology, a demand no one heeds. In a casual funny moment, as Popeye's ship and the company pursue Bluto and the abducted Olive and Swee'pea toward the dread Scab Island, Nana Oyl can be heard in voice over telling her son, "Don't worry, Castor, Pa's here"—as if that could possibly reassure anyone.

Popeye tells us *his* father would throw him up in his arms as an infant and often not catch him when he came down. Finally totally abandoned,

Popeye has sought this absent father for 30 years. Altman does a particularly fine job in working the reunion of father and son, as mannered and stylized and amusing as comedy requires, and yet—like certain other crucial moments of love in the film—very touching as the two men examine each other nose to nose and corncob to corncob, the son embracing the father with loving joy, the father flatly denying the absolute likeness. He's proud of himself as a hating man, brother to the shark, and fiercely refuses the tender, the domestic, emotions. Even when compelled to accept his paternal status, Pap still growls about children, all that you do for them and how you get nothing back. Besides, he says, they're just smaller versions of us, and he's not so crazy about himself—a sour misanthropic vision not far removed from that reflected in many Altman films! Swee'pea, however, (Altman's own grandchild) reduces the curmudgeon to burbling and doting, his crustiness dissolves into sweetness and mush, and thus he too is relinked to family and community.

Of course there are struggles over authority between him and Popeye, from the funny bit—given the context—about Popeye's hating to eat spinach, to the conflict over how to approach Bluto's boat. But Pap's Commodore role of ultimate authority is somehow not well worked through—although Ray Walston, faulted by some as a jarringly false Broadway-musical note in this production, seems to me in his performance to be sufficiently integrated into the tone of the film. In any case, the ultimate treasure—you won't be surprised to hear—is not the Commodore's near absolute power but the buried remnants of childhood and parent-child love.

The love of lovers is also a central theme of the film, done oddly but no less effectively for that. Olive and Popeye move toward each other in scenes that are all obliqueness and awkwardness. Both lean over the baby's cradle pretending to tend him and really fumbling shyly toward each other, as they sing "Sail with me," "Stay with me." Later with Popeye desolate over Swee'pea's kidnapping, Olive slowly sings and dances about loving Popeye: "All at once I knew he needed me." The tune could easily be rendered as a conventional show tune but is instead delivered with inspiredly off-key notes and clumsy dance movements that are like parodies of graceful lyrical ones. The total effect is of a mixture of tones, funny and poignant and tender, that is a wonder. Altman surely learned how to work such magic from his treatment in *Nashville* of Sueleen Gay—the talentless waitress dreaming of stardom but disastrous as singer and performer, and still entirely captivating, the more so the more she sings off key. In *Popeye* too, Olive's caring is the more compellingly expressed for the gawkiness and the skillfully modulated flatness. A similarly cockeyed kind of intimacy occurs in a scene when the two first kiss—she complaining about something else and saying Phooey all the while. A perverse style of love-making, perhaps a bittersweet variety of ironic detachment, but it works, without as yet turning into mannerism.

These love scenes occur about the time in the film that Popeye sings his Song of Myself, "I yam what I yam"; love and self-acceptance are mates. Olive involves Swee'pea in the horseraces, despite Popeye's stern moral disapproval, and disturbed at not being heeded, Popeye repeatedly asks, "What am I?" and answers, singing, that "I yam what I yam and that's all that I yam." As he sings, he dances—at first only on the edges of the excited throng, their attention busy elsewhere. But through the increasing demand made by his repeated question, he finally triumphantly reaches the center of the circle and of their focus, identity strongly asserted and taken full cognizance of by all. Later he even takes Swee'pea away and leaves Olive to live elsewhere, to avoid her "child abuxe."

These acts of self-assertion occur at the same time Popeye is honored by the community for ridding them of the tax man. Popeye will no longer be taken advantage of. His feats are complete when he releases his loved ones from the tentacles of both Bluto and the octopus (following the chase and rescue motif of the cartoons). Olive says, "My hero," the ultimate accolade capping his public and private ascendancy. So Popeye the isolato ends with firm, and mostly happy, bonds to woman, child, father, and community. True, it says something about the nature of family ties, as Feiffer and Altman see them, that whenever members of his family try to help Popeye in his life-and-death struggle with Bluto, they end up inadvertently nearly knocking out his brains, or tying his

hands, or proclaiming that he's losing when he's not. There is constant altercation between brother and sister, parent and child, "husband" and "wife" through the film. Still, there is love and connectedness of sorts, imperfect though it is; the bad rival is headed for that sea of isolation from which Popeye so recently emerged; and this pop Ishmael is no longer a castaway. For a change, the world is gained rather than lost. An odd mixture of the trivial and the archetypal, full of the great delight in film-making that Altman's work so often conveys (and evokes in us), *Popeye* in its small off-key way is a heartening start to a year the prospects of which do little to raise the spirit.

—BARBARA QUART

THE SHINING

Director: Stanley Kubrick. Script: Kubrick and Diane and Johnson. Photography: John Alcott. Warners.

To all appearances, *The Shining* is simply a hopelessly clichéd gothic horror film. Can this be serious? A lonely house on a hill haunted by ancestral ghosts that curse successive generations and force them to re-enact the original horror. It is not even redeemed by overwhelming technique—Kubrick no doubt enjoyed the helicopter and Steadicam shots but, considering his past technical achievements, these are hardly landmarks. Moreover, many individual shots, at least in concept, are stock horror film material: Hallorann (Scatman Crothers) walking down the empty hallway to his death, back to the audience, waiting for the proverbial ax to fall; Nicholson, weapon in hand, dragging his wounded leg around the mansion, searching for his victims; the eerie night shot of Duvall, trying to escape, stuck halfway out the bathroom window ("Run, Danny, run"). The suspense is equally predictable: Nicholson's prescient nightmare of his imminent attempt to murder his wife and child; the crosscutting between the endangered mother and child and Hallorann's rescue attempt; the snocat which won't start at a crucial moment in the action. And, above all, *The Shining,* as gothic horror, is filled with apparent inconsistencies and loose ends.

Although most critics have duly noted these aspects of the film, they have dismissed them as inexplicable failings. However, given Kubrick's propensity to use genres merely as vehicles *(2001, Barry Lyndon),* one suspects that the "failings" in *The Shining* are related to Kubrick's interest in deliberately redirecting the audience's attention elsewhere. What are Kubrick and screenwriter Diane Johnson up to here?

Without doubt it has much to do with horror. But if it isn't just gothic horror, what kind of horror is Kubrick showing us? Certainly it has to do with an unnatural father and husband, a man who turns on his family in the most savage way. A closer look at Nicholson's role as father and husband—the American breadwinner—will be useful for understanding the more profound level of horror at work in the film.

Our first view of Jack Torrance (Nicholson) is in the interview with Stuart Ullman, who exudes the solicitous concern of an undertaker. Though he is merely a hotel manager, Ullman decorates his desk in a manner befitting a government official, conspicuously displaying a small American flag, not the last one we will see among the film's significant background details. Ullman is proud of the luxurious Overlook Hotel and especially the Indian motifs throughout its interior: the artifacts, the wall hangings, the rugs.

Ullman hires Jack as caretaker of the hotel, closed during the winter months. Torrance is delighted with the job, envisioning five months of peace and quiet in which to write his novel, even though this means subjecting his wife and young son to total isolation. Ullman tells Jack that the hotel, begun in 1907 and finished in 1909, was not welcomed by the local Indians, whose attacks were "repelled" during the hotel's construction. Ullman also remarks that the hotel was a playground for the jet-set long before it was called that and that it has been visited by several US presidents. Kubrick builds his world carefully and it soon becomes clear that the Overlook is much more than it seems. At one very important level it is a symbol of America, haunted by a murderous past that made it what it is: a showy display of affluence and excess ("You can be in this hotel for a whole year and never have to eat the same thing twice," declares Hallorann), built at the expense of innocent victims.

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As we will see, it becomes apparent that Jack is caretaker not only of the hotel but also of the American dream, depicted in the film as empty and haunted. This illusion is initially seductive but once embraced it shows itself rotting and destructive—like the mysterious woman in room 237. The paradox at the heart of the dream is evoked by the Torrance family ensconced like royalty in the empty Overlook Hotel, enchanted by the illusion of ownership while in fact they are merely employees, living in the shabbiest corner of the hotel. The obverse reality of Kubrick's America is something other than the hotel's surface opulence: look again and you see peanut butter and jelly sandwiches on white bread, Apollo sweatshirts, Oreo cookies, Heinz ketchup, Roadrunner cartoons—the essence of tacky Americana.

In some ways, *The Shining* interprets the American dream somewhat as Fitzgerald does in *The Great Gatsby,* with Gatsby's West Egg soirees replaced by Jack's fantasies of elegant parties in the Overlook's Gold Ballroom. Kubrick however, captures an aspect of the dream that Fitzgerald ignored. Jack maintains an informal western appearance and a drawling speech (especially odd since he has recently been living in Vermont), though he sees himself accepted into the salons of the elite. In Kubrick's version of the American Dream, admittance to the elite does not mean an automatic sacrifice of one's man-in-the-street authenticity to snobbery. The most seductive aspect of Kubrick's version is that a man can have his cake and eat it too. Or can he?

Torrance, a would-be cowboy with a typewriter, is doing his duty, writing the Great American Novel that will insure his rightful place among the successful. His rugged individualism has compelled him to seek solitude in a Rocky Mountain resort, an outpost of civilization where he hopes ideas for the novel will be forthcoming. They are not. "Something wrong with the sperm bank upstairs," he tells Lloyd, the bartender—an ambiguous phrase that refers either to his writer's block or to his inchoate suspicion that his wife's presence is making his work impossible. "Nothing I can't take care of, though," he reassures Lloyd as he swizzles a whiskey straight. Cowboy Jack has found his Indian and the war is on. The Indian motifs cannot be merely accidental, there are just too many of them: Wendy's Indian jacket, moccasin-like boots, beaded belt and braids; the rugs and wall hangings; Wendy stalking through the hotel, knife in hand; Danny, like an Indian scout, retracing his steps in the maze; the periodic drum and rattle music—stereotypes to be sure, but for just this reason, easily accessible. Less obvious, perhaps, is the image of Jack at work in the cavernous lobby, backed by an American flag but surrounded on three sides by Indian designs.

Jack's writing is vitally important to his sense of manhood; thus he feels horribly threatened by his inability to produce. He searches for a scapegoat, a reason for the failure, never entertaining the idea that he might be the source of the problem. His irrationality reaches a climax in the staircase scene when he threatens to murder Wendy, who protects herself with a baseball bat. Jack has failed as a writer. His hundreds of novel-like pages contain only variant retypings of the proverb "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy"—his work is all form and no content. Jack then remembers his job as caretaker of the hotel (a job that his wife has actually been doing, seeing to the heating, the radios, the power plant, as Jack writes his novel). When Wendy tells him that they must leave the hotel and find a doctor for their son, Jack explodes. He tells her he has responsibilities to his employer; he has been hired to take care of the hotel and he must not fail to do his duty.

Jack's sense of self and of his relation to others in his often fantasized world shows him to be animated by a patriarchal authoritarianism. This patriarchal world is well defined by his alter-ego relationship to Lloyd and to Grady, the waiter, both men ostensibly servants who have in reality a great deal of control over Jack. After a hard day at work and troubles with the wife, Jack seeks out the local bartender, confidant and caretaker of the male ego. An oddly Faustian pact seems to exist between the two men. Jack sells his soul for a drink, that is, if he is allowed to use liquor to shift the responsibility for his creative block, he will show the boys that he can take care of his problems. The price he pays for the right to conveniently redefine his problem is an unstated agreement to "correct" his wife.

Although the connection between Grady the waiter and Grady the caretaker is confused, the

function of Grady the waiter's relation to Jack is unambiguous—the slave emerges as the real master. The model authoritarian father, Grady allows Jack to rationalize his murderous intentions by disguising them as disciplinary measures that are a father's prerogative. Later, when Jack has been knocked unconscious by his desperate wife and locked in the storeroom, Grady shows up to reprimand him, faulting him for loss of nerve and clearly implying that Jack doesn't have what it takes to be a man. He has allowed his wife to best him. Jack pleads for another chance, giving his word of honor that this time he will do it right. Then, in one of the more puzzling moments in the film, Grady, the ostensible phantom, apparently unlocks the door.

The ending of the film is reminiscent in some ways of the ending of *The Picture of Dorian Gray.* Jack, the loser, frozen to death in the snow, is trapped figuratively and literally in a maze, the victim of the image of himself as the handsome success we see in the last frame (the July 4th, 1921 photo), an image that has obsessed and finally destroyed him. This "splendid portrait" (apologies to Oscar Wilde) hangs in the hotel lobby to seduce other men who too will "overlook" what has gone before, thinking, like Jack Torrance, that they can escape the ancestral curse. In a sense, Kubrick seems to be saying that America has a right to be superstitious, that its ghosts are real, capable of driving men mad, and that the most dangerous ghosts of all are the myths of success ("The American Dream") and of the authoritarian father.

Kubrick and Johnson have thus constructed an American morality play within the framework of a horror/suspense film combining elements of what we may term the "haunted house" and "crazed killer" varieties. Why would such a structure be attractive? Among the conventional features of these films we find haunted mansions whose ghosts interact with various human characters, the violence of madmen, and innocent victims who realize that they are about to be victimized barely in time to escape destruction—if they realize it at all. It makes sense, then, to suppose that a film-maker, convinced that destructive ghosts from the past haunt America's contemporary ideological land-

Torrance makes his devil's bargain . . .

scape, might turn to the horror/suspense genre, particularly when these ghosts encourage, as they do in *The Shining,* isolation, madness, and victimization.

But what is it about *The Shining* that is unsatisfying? Primarily it is that the symbolic and literal (i.e., nonsymbolic) levels of the film tend to diverge from one another, sometimes to too great an extent to be reunited without artificial devices which confuse the viewer. The critics' complaints that the film is damaged by too many loose ends and seemingly inexplicable details and incongruities thus are justified, as far as they go. What has not been explored, however, are the reasons these problems arise at all. For this, we must look at the multileveled structure of the film as it develops within the plan described above.

There are actually three basic levels of the film, each dealing with a different set of events:

. . . and women, children, and blacks suffer

The fantasy level: Jack's interactions with the Overlook's phantoms—Lloyd, Grady, the party-goers in the Gold Ballroom, and the woman in room 237. Events on this level tend to have purely symbolic or allegorical significance.

The family level: The interactions of the members of the Torrance family with one another. This level itself divides into two distinct segments. The first, commencing at the beginning of the film and ending with Wendy leaving Jack locked in the storeroom, frequently functions as an allegory concerning the way in which the members of a contemporary American middle-class family relate to each other. The second, beginning in earnest with Jack's ax smashing through the apartment door and ending with Wendy and Danny escaping in Hallorann's rented snocat, is primarily a horror tale featuring a crazed ax murderer's hunt for victims in a house haunted by phantoms.

The shining level: Danny's exercise of his shining powers and related interactions. This level is composed of scenes dealing with (a) Danny's communications (spoken as well as shined) with Hallorann, (b) Danny's exchanges with Tony and (c) his visitations by images of two little girls, presumably the former caretaker's twin daughters.

The confusion produced in many viewers by what turn out to be the more symbolic elements of the film is not necessarily surprising, since for about the first full hour of the film we are miscued: we have virtually no idea that anything symbolic is going to go on at all, much less that it is to be the heart of the movie. What may constitute an exception to this, though, surfaces during the Torrances' drive to the Overlook. When Danny asks about the Donner Party, Jack replies that they were forced to eat each other "in order to stay alive," thus describing in a metaphorical way what can happen to families under the pressure of the myths of success and masculinity treated in the film.

But there is something else. The fantasy level and the first part of the family level contain most of the social comment, which according to this analysis is of primary importance to the film. However, the most dramatic literal narrative moments of the film are provided by the second part of the family level and the shining level. This creates a problem, since several of the most significant symbolic sequences of the film (e.g., Jack's talks with Lloyd and Grady; the juxtaposition of Jack, frozen in the maze, with the July 4, 1921 photo) occur apart from the moments of high dramatic interest, thus making it less likely that the audience will appreciate the importance of these scenes. Jack and Wendy's semi-allegorical staircase confrontation is a notable exception (though technically, it occurs late in the first part of the family level, and not in the second); it is not surprising, then, that this is one of the film's most gripping and effective sequences. (Incidentally, the allegory in this confrontation is actually threefold. It involves the pressure on males to carry out work responsibilities and the fetishization of contracts as well as stereotypical postures of husbands and wives in domestic quarrels.)

The symbolic and the literal are mismatched in other ways. A few scenes which have symbolic meaning (e.g., Jack seeing Wendy and Danny in the maze model—the father/master surveying his charges) are without a matching amount of meaning for the narrative, if they have any at all. On the other hand, there are several sequences important to the horror narrative which lack a matching amount of symbolic content (e.g., Jack breaking into the apartment; the snocat arriving).

In addition, the contents of some symbolically important moments are unnecessary or even intrusive on the literal level. For instance, Jack's talk with Grady in the men's room serves social comment purposes, allowing Kubrick to represent the pressures exerted on men (by other men) through the myth of the authoritarian father. Here, the need for "discipline" has become a cover for merely destructive impulses expressing Jack's inner frustration. However, on the literal level, the addition of the mythic element becomes superfluous. For just as we do not need Grady's later taunting of Jack in the storeroom to make it plausible that Jack will continue to pursue his family once he gets out, we do not need the added psychodynamics introduced in this scene to make it plausible that Jack turns killer. Both the staircase confrontation and subsequent ax attack fit in more naturally with previous nonsymbolic expressions of frustration (e.g., Jack playing handball in his work room; Jack becoming irritated with Wendy for "disturbing [his] concentration"; his nightmare and pro-

gressive facial distortions). In fact, if any symbolically significant scene is relevant to convincing us that Jack can indeed turn killer, it is his comment to Lloyd that his "sperm bank" problems are "nothing [he] can't handle."

Here, ironically, the horror film conventions themselves get in the way. The establishing of elaborate psychological mechanisms is not needed to give a "crazed killer" film its interest—the mere *sequencing* of threatening behavior, portrayed only on the phenomenological level, can be enough to satisfy the audience, since to become involved in such a film, we only need be tuned to when, where, or whom the killer will strike next. For example in *Psycho,* we do not know through most of the film what motivates Anthony Perkins to strike, and we do not need to care. Nonetheless, Kubrick may feel that relying solely on interest in when the killer will strike tends to make for merely superficial or cheap suspense, and hence he may see Grady's talks with Jack not as intrusive, but as lending a certain amount of sophistication to the narrative while allowing the expression of social observations.

The sequences involving room 237 appear to be intended to tie the three levels together, though this does not always occur with the desired seamlessness. These scenes comprise (a) Jack's interaction with a hotel ghost (the nude bather/hag) functioning as a symbolic representation of an American ideal (fantasy level); (b) Jack, acting as a protector, at the behest of his wife, who insists that Jack go into room 237 for a look because the "crazy woman" who hurt Danny is in there (family level) and (c) Danny having had premonitions about room 237 and having provoked a cryptic warning from Halloran when he asked about the place (shining level).

The ball which rolls onto the rug where Danny is playing appears to be merely a device to lead him to his attacker, so that the film can begin to build in earnest. Having only set the stage up until this point (showing us Jack's growing frustration, revealing Danny's psychic powers, especially in connection with the Overlook Hotel, and showing us Wendy's closeness to Danny and the isolation of the Overlook in the winter), Kubrick needs a way to, well, start the ball rolling and get us to the important symbolic scenes (Jack goes to the Gold Ballroom for his first encounter with Lloyd after Wendy accuses him of being Danny's molester) and to important narrative developments. (As Jack goes to room 237 to look for the alleged attacker, Danny shines to Hallorann for help, starting the latter's fatal journey. In addition, Wendy's decision to leave the hotel with Danny, which in turn sets the stage for the staircase confrontation, the subsequent chases and Jack's ultimate destruction in the maze, is prompted in large part by the attack on Danny.)

Who it was that *did* attack Danny is, to many viewers, left too unclear to be satisfying. Insofar as *The Shining* is taken strictly as a horror/suspense film, this response is not unreasonable, for in such films, raising and providing the answer to a "whodunit" question is frequently the source of the basic interest. However, whether it was Jack or the woman in 237 who rolled the ball, and who it was that actually attacked Danny, are not ultimately significant issues for the film seen as a *symbolic* exercise. Treating the film this way, we need only interpret the attack, whether by Jack or by the woman in room 237 (supposing that these two *are* the only candidates) as the victimization of innocent kids by contemporary cultural mythologies *en bloc.* Perhaps Kubrick even left it unresolved whether Jack or the woman was the attacker in order to raise the question of the extent to which an individual influenced by hegemonic mythologies is actually responsible for the damage that acting in accordance with them may cause. While this may seem farfetched initially, this kind of issue would not be out of keeping with the kinds of philosophical issues concerning responsibility for one's actions which surfaced in *A Clockwork Orange.*

Many viewers, however, do not experience the film as the rather dislocated work the observations above could lead one to expect. Why is this?

For one thing, the segue from the first to the second part of the family level is gradual enough so that the transition to the crazed killer story from the American family allegory does not jar. For instance, the move to Jack breaking into the apartment via the staircase scene, Wendy giving Danny-now-Tony his breakfast, and the "Redrum" sequence, transforms our expectations in such a way that we make the transition without really being aware of it, which is as it should be.

Further, the various story lines are eliminated in an order appropriate to the film's symbolic project. First, Hallorann is killed off, terminating the shining level. Subsequently, Wendy and Danny leave in the snocat, terminating the family level. This leaves us only with the symbolic level on which to concentrate. Moreover, the film's final moments (juxtaposing the destroyed Jack with the elegant Jack in the photograph) has meaning in both literal and symbolic contexts. On the literal level, we find out that Jack has, as he claims, "been here before," apparently the reincarnation of a Roaring '20's hotel guest. On the symbolic level, we are shown the self-image (Jack as a member of the elite) that was a major component of his undoing.

Of the dissonant moments mentioned earlier, Grady's unlocking of the storeroom door is one of the most striking. While this occurrence, like the appearance of the tennis ball, does function as a device to get the action going again, it also serves to get the fantasy level back into the film after the audience has been distracted from it by some often intense drama (e.g., the staircase confrontation and the preceding scene in which Wendy discovers Jack's "prose").

While it is easy to dismiss the storeroom scene as a mere artifice (and we are not convinced that it is not ultimately this) it is worth remarking that this scene is not without potential symbolic meaning. For it is in this scene that we first see that the more "lifelike" phantoms, and not just the images of the twins, can move from place to place in the hotel. We can take this as a suggestion that the ideals with which the film is concerned haunt us more thoroughly than we may have imagined, a statement that their influence is *everywhere* in our culture. Finally, we might interpret the unlocking of the door as a symbolic, if somewhat coy, reminder that mythologies, like the ghost of Grady, may lack substance but can still have surprising efficacy in the material world.

The myth of "making it" is destroying Jack and his family, but *he* never sees things that way, or worse, never sees this situation as constituting a *problem*. Wendy, however, apparently does see this as she herself, running through the Overlook knife in hand, sees various specters—the Gold Ballroom filled with cobwebs and skeletons, Grady bleeding from the head, the ornate elevator spewing blood. Though these scenes appear unnecessary on the literal level, they serve an important symbolic function; here Wendy is seeing the underside of what has been driving Jack.

It is not entirely surprising that Wendy finally understands what has been going on with Jack. Early in the film, we can get the idea that Wendy already is, as it were, on the trail, as she describes how Jack dislocated Danny's shoulder. At first, it appears that she believes only that Jack's drinking was responsible. But she proceeds to tell us, increasingly embarrassed, how Jack came home from that particular spree to find that Danny had scattered some of his papers on the floor. At that point, we may suspect that she really *does* know at some level that Jack's attitude toward work was ultimately responsible, but is trying to keep this from herself. By the end of the film, however, her self-deception is no longer possible. In having the visions she does, Wendy is seeing not only what has happened to her husband, to their relationship, and to their son, but *why* it has happened.*

This brings us to the question of the ultimate significance of "shining" for the film. On the allegorical level, Hallorann's and Danny's shining powers at first seem to represent the ability—not necessarily supernatural—to see the ugly realities and histories behind inviting appearances, especially when these warn of impending victimization. (Danny's psychic friend Tony, who warns him about the Overlook Hotel, first appeared after Jack dislocated Danny's arm.) Shining, then seems to be a kind of survival skill that helps the oppressed to defend themselves. One of its most interesting aspects is the community formed by those who either shine or are aided by those who do—the only genuine community in the film, one made up of women, children, and blacks, three of America's traditional victims. It should be noted that the relationships between the child, the black, and the woman are the only ones free of the self-serving motives that govern those in which Jack participates. It is not surprising that Jack dies alone.

*The interpretation of Wendy's spectres, taken individually, though, is not without problems. It is hard to know, for example, what to make of the two men, one of whom wears what appears to be the mask of a pig or a boar, who have been interrupted in what is apparently an act of homosexual intercourse. Is this a homophobic way of saying that those who appear superficially to be the embodiment of masculinity (the "male chauvinist pigs"?) are in reality not very manly at all?

Ultimately, however, shining may be just what Hallorann told Danny it was—detecting the traces of the past and portents of the future operating in the present. In this sense, not only do Hallorann and Danny shine, but Jack and Wendy (and, one is tempted to add, all of us) do, too. Danny sees warning images of past victims, Jack is moved by the old forces which perpetrate (and perpetuate) the damage, while Wendy sees the perpetrators for what they really are, that is, what they will become. In the film's allegorical world, fathers (the white, middle-class, educated ones in particular) are the primary targets of the seductive side of the myth of success. Children are, and sense when they are about to be, victims of this myth, though they do not understand what is behind it. In this film, it is the mothers who are distant enough, yet involved and aware enough, to see what is seducing their husbands and destroying their kids though, like Wendy, they may do so after it is almost too late.

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION, 9/8/80

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I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete. Cynthia Deno, Journals Manager.

In *The Shining,* as in *Barry Lyndon,* Kubrick shows us a society in which surface elegance hides a dissipated and ultimately destructive existence. In *A Clockwork Orange,* he gave us one totally violent society; in *The Shining,* he gives us still another. This time, however, the violence is born of trying to live up to oppressive expectations and not out of some perverted lust for life. But what is most intriguing in *The Shining* is that Kubrick's themes of violence and dissipation are developed in a decidedly American, not European, context. In *2001,* Kubrick suggested we could transcend our dissipation with a new frontier—outer space. With *The Shining,* thirteen years later, he is observing that life in America might well destroy us first. If there are any frontiers left for Kubrick, they do not involve the expansion of boundaries but the construction of new social relationships within our existing borders.

In her review of *The Shining,* Pauline Kael implies that Kubrick, too long absent from America, cannot really understand us. But it is evident from the film that he understands us very well and is trying to tell us something important about ourselves. Kubrick, in fact, is coming home.

—FLO LEIBOWITZ AND LYNN JEFFRESS

PORTRAIT OF TERESA

Director: Pastor Vega. Story and screenplay: Pastor Vega and Ambrosio Fornet. Photography: Livio Delgado. Music: Carlos Farinas. Unifilm.

> *The social presence of a woman is different in kind from that of a man. . . . Men act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves. [Women turn themselves] into an object —and most particularly an object of vision: a sight.* —John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*

In his terse and polemical essay on the female nude in Western oil painting, Berger's general thesis of the acquisitive impulse of Western art, its lust for appropriation, is sustained by a two-pronged argument: the implicit assertion that the female form

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is the most desirable of all possessions, and the explicit analysis of the conventions of the genre as subordinate to the needs and desires of a constant but forever omitted protagonist—the owner/spectator, invariably male. The bold assurance of Berger's polemic is only strengthened by his admission that "Among the hundreds of thousands of nudes which make up the tradition there are perhaps a hundred . . . exceptions" whose transcendence of the norm can be explained by the fact that the painter's subject is also the "object" of his affections—the woman (or *a* woman) he loves. In such cases, the painter's personal vision of the particular woman he is painting is so strong that it "makes no allowance for the spectator . . . [who is] forced to recognize himself for the outsider he is."[1] The distinction is between portrait as "sight" and portrait as "experience."

Modern cinema has perpetuated the impulse towards the cataloging of enviable possessions and the concomitant iconization of the female. The history of the medium is laced with films whose ostensible impulse is the portrayal of "real" or fictional women, whatever "hidden agenda" may be concealed behind the heroines' skirts. One thinks of Ophuls's opulent *Lola Montes* and von Sternberg's vindictive remake of "Carmen," *The Devil Is a Woman;* of Buñuel's disturbing incarnations of skewed bourgeois morality—*Susana, Viridiana, Tristana;* or of recent efforts like the feeble *Coal Miner's Daughter* and Fassbinder's magnificent *Marriage of Maria Braun.* Cuban cinema, though barely two decades old, can lay claim to one monumental three-part example of this "woman-centered" genre: Humberto Solas's extraordinary trilogy *Lucia,* released in 1969.

In one sense, Pastor Vega's *Portrait of Teresa* (1979), the most important film to emerge from Cuba in recent years, can be viewed as a sequel to Part III of Lucia, in its resolute, even courageous depiction of the strains and contradictions of personal life in proletarian Cuba nearly two decades after the third Lucia acquired literacy and, with it, a sense of her own autonomy. Though Vega's film meshes with established cinematic tradition on the island and in the world at large, the explicit intentionality of the title commands closer attention.[2]

Pastor Vega has been making documentaries since 1961.[3] *Portrait of Teresa* is his first feature-length fictional film. His documentary formation would lead one to conclude that he does not take a word like "portrait" lightly. The word implies a passive (or at least stationary) subject, a certain possessiveness of vision, a simultaneous interpretation and appropriation. It presupposes a portraitist and simultaneously implicates an undefined spectator. The project of assessing *Portrait of Teresa* by examining precisely what kind of portrait it constitutes takes on an added dimension in light of the fact that the subject of director Vega's "portrait" (Daisy Granados as Teresa) is, offscreen, his wife. (The three boys in the film are the couple's own.)

More fluid than a depiction in poetry or prose, a static photograph or oil painting, a filmed "portrait" is a dynamized assembly of scenes and events in which the nominal subject is not always present or, if present, is not always the primary focus. What the film "says" at the level of dialogue and action constitutes only one stratum of meaning—a stratum always open to differing interpretations, at that. The theory of "structuring absences" would argue that what is omitted from the story is potentially as significant as what is included. Additional and potentially conflicting meanings are embedded in the myriad decisions which determine style and form. The various aspects of the film's *facture* which combine to compose the "portrait" in question also constitute a kind of practice, encoding in a more veiled and potentially less conscious manner the explicit themes of the film: in this case, the theory, practice and ideology of sex/gender relationships in a society undergoing socialist transformation.

The opening and closing shots bracket the film with two very different still portraits of Teresa. The pre-credit sequence opens with a slow track-in on a woman and children along a cement promenade with the ocean as backdrop. Still in long-shot, the camera pans with the kids as they move towards a refreshment stand, then cuts to a man readying a view-finder camera. Looking up, he calls, "Teresa!" The camera cuts to a close-up of her from the back, looking seaward. She instantly turns her head in response to her husband's call, solemn and only mildly startled. Her flowing black

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An expanded version of this review will appear in a forthcoming issue of *The Social Text.*

hair, tousled by the wind and her own abrupt movement, partially conceals her features. The frame freezes as the film's title appears superimposed on this image.

The film ends with another freeze-frame portrait of Teresa, again in the open air. By this time, the family unit has been rent asunder by Teresa's dual rejection of the "double shift" (full-time responsibilities at work with no concomitant modification of household responsibilities) and the double standard. The context is not a weekend family outing but the pedestrian-congested workaday streets of downtown Havana. Teresa's luxuriant hair, established earlier in the film as a symbol of her sexuality, is here totally concealed under a white silk scarf tied Afro-Cuban style around her head. The transition from loud street music whose lyrics parody the life she is leaving behind ("Te-re-sa, sweep the floor! Te-re-sa! Te-re-sa!") to more reflexive instrumental strains prepares us for a final shot of her, purposeful and confident, in contrast to the husband who, though once in control, now tracks her at a distance, disoriented and unsure. As Teresa walks resolutely towards the camera, the background crowd disperses and goes increasingly out of focus until her head fills the center screen and, echoing the opening sequence, the frame freezes the final time.

Her husband's initial portrait stripped her of her social context, silhouetting her against sky and sea in an image that, in retrospect, cannot help but evoke the self-destructive end of too many creative, trapped women—real or fictional. The final portrait, in contrast, isolates her against a sea of faces, retaining her social context while particularizing her within it. Her image is not being "captured" by her husband as a "portrait of the eternal female, privatized, a glamor-magazine cliché stripped of her social context to enhance her desirability."[4] No longer the passive, stationary subject, she is being instantaneously (and only temporarily) "frozen" in her resolute movement forward by *another* portraitist—invisible, omniscient—who works in a more dynamic medium. It is significant that in this final freeze-frame Teresa does not face the camera head-on as she did in the opening shot. No longer looking at herself being looked at, she has ceased to be defined by the "vision" of husband, parent, or social convention.

Framed by these two "snapshots" is a more

Teresa in the plant locker room

dynamic portrait, constituted by the detailed depiction of Teresa's life with family, friends, and fellow workers. The film's accessible, quasi-documentary style, compelling acting, and candid presentation of marital strains and the fits and starts of change when personal consciousness lags behind social policy have elicited enthusiastic popular response in Cuba and abroad. Reactions in Cuba, though impassioned, have not been uniformly positive. Upon its release in mid-1979, *Portrait of Teresa* reportedly catalyzed countless domestic crises and unleashed weeks of heated debate in newspapers and magazines, on radio, television, and streetcorners. Half the adult population of Havana, setting for the film, had seen the movie within the first six weeks of its release and, apparently, few viewers declined to take sides in the confrontation between "sacred" family tradition and women's need for self-realization.

Clearly, this is a topic whose time has come. During the past decade, Cuban leaders have given priority to the "revolution within the revolution," attempting to educate for and legislate sexual equality in the home as well as the workplace, in the bedroom as well as the kitchen. The Cuban Family Code, promulgated in 1974 after widespread public discussion and debate, has been the spearhead of this effort, requiring equal participation by both partners in domestic chores and child-rearing and stipulating that women are entitled to the same sexual prerogatives as men. Though equality can be formally legislated (in some countries), it obviously cannot be formally enforced in the most private arena of personal life, where change is always fragmentary, disorganized, uneven—and extraordinarily painful. *Portrait of*

Teresa reduces the scale of that nationwide campaign to the more intimate proportions of a single household, a single couple, without abstracting them from the larger social context in which they live and work. (To appreciate this uncommon balance, one need only recall the narrowly encapsulated social world of *Kramer vs. Kramer.*)

Though the components of Teresa's personal crisis and the setting in which it is played out are carefully established, though the portrait is intimate enough to reveal both bedroom battles and the relentless tedium of her morning housework, Teresa seems somehow elusive. Essentially limited to re-acting rather than acting on her own initiative, and accessible to us only through overt response rather than through inner thoughts, dreams, or fantasies, Teresa remains partially inscrutable—just as certain crucial components of her life remain unknown. Repeated closeups of her—pensive, withdrawn, dejected—bear the burden of communicating her subjectivity and inner struggle.

Significantly, from the perspective of Berger's analysis of female portraiture in Western painting, she first assumes this pose in front of a mirror. In the opening bedroom sequence, as she and Ramon discuss her late arrival and the kids' bedtime routine, she regards her own image while the camera records both the real and reflected Teresa. The following morning, alone after her chores, she again surveys herself, finger in mouth and eyes downcast, intermittently coquettish and grave.

In subsequent shots which denote inner struggle, she is invariably seated and often morose: in the locker room at work, on a park bench, on her mother's patio, on a family outing. The film's "objectivity" and even realism of tone is never violated in the interest of communicating a more subjective kind of experience through voice-overs or other stylistic means. It is not that the heroine is elusive but that the film-maker, in keeping with his acknowledged quest for a documentary-style vision,[5] chooses an unmitigatedly externalized mode of portrayal, preferring in both script and visual style to expand more energy on social interaction than on inner being.

There is perhaps another more significant reason why the portrait of Teresa seems strangely incomplete. The title of the film is in fact a telling misnomer. Cubans of both sexes insist that the politics of sexuality do not divide into women's issues and men's. They believe instead that the lowest common social denominator is not one sex "abstracted" from the other but both sexes together as the basic interactional unit: *la pareja,* the heterosexual couple. Despite its title, Vega's film is in fact not so much a challenge to as a validation of this position. Though it claims to present a portrait of Teresa, what the film actually constructs is a portrait of a *couple,* Teresa *and* Ramon—or at best a portrait of Teresa *in terms of* her relationship to Ramon. This explains why the film follows the events of his work and personal life as closely as it does hers. It can even be argued that the film presents *more* details of Ramon's life, since we witness the inception, development, and decline of his extra-marital affair whereas Teresa's possible intimacy with a co-worker constitutes the biggest enigma of the film. Instead of following Teresa's subsequent development as an autonomous being, the film ends with the end of the relationship.

The more one interrogates Teresa's portrayal, the more disquieting omissions, contradictions and biases come to light. Teresa's decision to reject the reconciliation proposed by Ramon hinges on two factors: her determination to challenge the double standard by turning the tables on traditional sexual mores which encourage philandering in the male while demanding charity as well as chastity from the female, and the support she says she has derived from friends during the crisis. We are left somewhat puzzled about which friends she is referring to in this conversation with her cousin Charo, since she seems in fact extremely isolated.[6]

When her friend Sonia, visiting Teresa at home, tells her, "Not everyone has your luck, with a husband who loves you and lends a hand," Teresa does nothing to counter this misrepresentation of her "ideal" marriage, preferring to change the subject and suffer the painful irony in silence. Bernal, plant manager and benevolent father figure, is removed and mildly patronizing. More of a counsellor than a genuine friend, he is capable of cutting off Teresa's account of her problems in the service of "more important" business. Both her mother and her divorced cousin Charo advocate adherence to the double standard that Teresa is determined to reject, thus intensifying her isolation. After her separation from Ramon she is also

narratively severed from what we assume to be her most intimate and sustaining relationships, specifically from her three sons who, though they remain with her, subsequently appear in the film only when motivated by the imminent or actual presence of their father.

Only one candidate remains to provide the friendship which sustains Teresa: Tomas, her co-worker and collaborator in organizing the amateur dance group of textile workers which is the locus of her political activity and creative energy and (because of the long hours it involves) the initial bone of marital contention. His devotion is conveyed most tellingly by a silent vigil he keeps beside the nearly catatonic Teresa on a park bench. There are only two indications that their friendship entails more than political dedication, parallel creative interests, and platonic camaraderie: a shared cigarette at a dance rehearsal and, more important, Tomas's reaction when Teresa informs him of their group's invitation to perform in national competition. "Today I *can* kiss you, can't I?" he asks confidently, implying a prior history of forestalled attempts and suggesting that from his point of view *she* is perhaps the real prize to be won by this collective effort. In striking contrast to the explicit scenes of Ramon and his girlfriend trysting on the beach or on her brocade couch, the narrative ellipses which "edit out" the exact nature of Teresa's relationship to Tomas seem at first a product of discretion, then coyness, and finally blatant censorship in the Freudian sense. It is not inconsequential that this ellipsis replicates the social attitude which the film purportedly criticizes: that extra-marital sexual intimacy is tolerable, even encouraged, for men but inconceivable for women.[7]

It is also troubling to note that the stimulation and satisfaction Teresa derives from her "extra-curricular" work are largely referred to rather than represented. The locker room argument over the needles, which begins the film, is clearly not an example of the charismatic leadership qualities which the avuncular Bernal, in a later sequence, attributes to Teresa. Here she bitterly and aggressively denounces her co-worker for putting commitments to friends and family above her obligations to the collective cultural effort. A subsequent scene shows Teresa at work fitting a costume. Instead of encouragement or praise, her efforts are met with friendly derision; the general consensus is that the costume looks ridiculous. Later Tomas, presumably her co-equal in authority, chides Teresa for disrupting *his* rehearsals with *her* fittings.

Though we repeatedly see her sullen, despondent, desperate on camera, scenes which contribute to the growth of Teresa's self-esteem are comparatively few. News of the dance group's invitation to perform in national competition is undercut by Tomas's response and counterbalanced by the jubilant celebration at the TV technicians school where Ramon, having won a prized post in Santiago, is awarded his diploma. Teresa's television appearance after her dance group wins the competition should be her crowning triumph. Yet the unctuous emcee (played without prompting by German Pinelli, Cuba's best known TV personality of pre-revolutionary vintage) manages to rob her of this satisfaction by turning the appearance into one more display of mindless sexism as perpetuated by the mass media. All substantive questions are directed to Tomas, while Teresa is politely relegated to the status of decorative object of contemplation, gallantry and, finally, suspicion: Shouldn't the husband of such an attractive woman be on his guard? Though the sequence serves a progressive function in the critique of the mass media which is one of the dominant themes of the film, it also reinforces the image of Teresa as relatively passive and defenseless outside the domestic sphere. Thus the activities which Teresa associates with her self-realization are consistently belittled or depicted as laced with tension and strain rather than deserved satisfactions.

Though the film calls into question both the "double day" and the double standard, its structure implies an artificial separation between the two. Once Teresa and Ramon have separated, the

Within the pareja *(couple): rage*

focus shifts from questions of the double day to the morality of women's sexual freedom. The suggestion that Teresa's problems could be solved by relating to another, more "evolved" man poses an individual, private solution to what has been established earlier as a social problem.

Except for the mother-in-law's exclamation, "Thank God you have all boys!", the film circumvents the issue of the socialization of the next generation. Its unchallenged affirmation of *mother-right* and the marked and disproportionate separation of labor in parenting implicitly condone the perpetuation of existing sex/gender dynamics. The very existence of a film like this one politicizes the issues of domestic life, but except for one workers' assembly where poor childcare facilities are discussed as a public problem, the forum for addressing issues of sexual equality *within the film* remains the private, domestic sphere.

Ironically, Teresa's work at home, on the job, and as a political activist in the cultural sphere all vindicate the ancient Hispanic adage, "For the woman, needle and thread." She is a textile worker by day, a costume designer and seamstress after hours. One of the most overdetermined images of her domestic entrapment was her, once again, at her sewing machine. In the first line of dialogue, Teresa asks a co-worker, "Did you bring the needles?" It seems that Teresa's will to "find herself" inevitably entails the "womanly" emblems of needle and thread.

Ramon's work is the vehicle which allows Vega to offer the general view of Cuban life which is one of the film's most unusual aspects. His job as a TV repairman offers him mobility, relative independence, and broad social exposure. Teresa's work, voluntary as well as salaried, keeps her within the walls of the textile plant. Without the interest in documenting varieties of domestic life, Ramon might well have been scripted as a factory or construction worker, but it is inconceivable that Teresa could have had another job which would give her a mobility similar to Ramon's.

Though Ramon makes certain gestures toward lending Teresa a hand around the house (he clears his plate from the table in one sequence, takes the kids off to school in another), actually performing "woman's work" seems altogether outside his role. When his mother gives him instructions for making dinner, he says he'll "just pick up a bite on the street." When Teresa lets him know that if he walks out the door, he's leaving for good, she signals the break by tearing his clothes out of the closet and threatening to throw them out the front door. "Let *another woman* wash these for you!" she cries, missing the chance to challenge him to do his own laundry and indicating how deeply engrained concepts of "women's work" are in *both* sexes.

These problems of characterization and concept must be balanced against the film's bold initiative and substantial achievements. *Portrait of Teresa* adopts a critical stance toward contemporary Cuban society, displaying the kind of refreshing candor which characterizes the most intriguing Cuban films. Here the critical commentary ranges from good-humored barbs (the fat man jostled off the over-flowing bus, the argument over equivalences at the seaside beer stand, power failures and poor telephone connections) to serious and perhaps even urgent warning signs of social malaise (the round-the-clock dependency on cigarettes, the pervasive domestic discord and psychological stress in a cultural setting where women as well as men are portrayed as extremely guarded despite their putative gregariousness). In response to questions about the genesis of the film, Vega explains that it has its roots in a psychological study done by the Academy of Sciences on the crisis of traditional (pre-socialist) family structures in socialist Cuba.

As suggested earlier, the film reserves the brunt of its criticism for the mass media—women's magazines of superficial scope, "schlocky" popular music (domestic or imported), and, in particular, television. Denunciation of the latter's role as pacifier and mindless escape-hatch is crystallized in the numerous sequences which expose that medium's continuing cultivation of archaic female stereotypes in equally archaic melodramatic forms. Early in the film, Teresa arrives home from a late rehearsal to find two neighbor women watching TV in her living room while Ramon, feeling neglected and resentful, does a slow burn in the bedroom. The voice-over strains of the tear-jerker —"I am going to confront you with all the strength of my soul!"—are in explicit contrast to the suppressed passions of the barely deflected bedroom confrontation. In a later scene, Ramon, waiting for payment, is forced to watch with a mesmerized customer while an actress in early-nineteenth-cen-

tury frills gushes over her erring lover's sagacity in winning her forgiveness by offering *"una sencilla rosa."* When Ramon later makes the same peace offering to Teresa, our twentieth-century heroine tosses the flower out the window in exasperation and disgust.

One of the most remarkable aspects of the film is its determination to survey contemporary Cuban home life. *Portrait of Teresa* casually offers what is in fact a very studied cross-section of kinds and classes of Cuban housing and family structure: the modest but cheerful bungalows of Teresa and Ramon's neighborhood, the modern high-rise apartment blocks of Alamar, the elegant colonial patio of Teresa's mother's house, the decrepit shack of the inhospitable black man with his arm in a cast, the plush appointments and generous proportions of the nineteenth-century mansion where Ramon's girlfriend lives with her parents. The nuclear family seems to prevail, but due to a persistent housing shortage truncated versions of the extended family are also common: Teresa's mother has taken in her divorced niece and her children apparently in exchange for housekeeping services; the unfriendly black man lives with his sister; after walking out on Teresa, Ramon moves back in with his mother.

The stylistic eclecticism and experimental mixture of modalities which characterizes earlier Cuban films as thematically and formally diverse as *Memories of Underdevelopment, The First Charge of the Machete, Bay of Pigs,* and *One Way or Another* has only distant echoes here in the incorporation of the "rival" medium, television. The "formal resonance" of these now-classic films[8] is here replaced by a system of purely verbal resonances. The script is subtly structured by repetitions and transformative echoes of past exchanges. The effect is to suggest a kind of closed world—while at the same time affirming the possibility of transformative regeneration of meaning when the same phrases are echoed in a new context.

After she defiantly drops the unwashed dinner dishes in the trash can, Ramon asks Teresa in solicitous tones, "What has happened to you?" Unwilling to take exclusive responsibility for her predicament, she immediately fires the question back at him. After their separation, Ramon drops in unexpectedly as Teresa and their eldest son are dancing to the music of a TV show. Both use the same phrase—"It just came to me all of a sudden, right Tony?"—to conceal the real motives for her dancing and his visit from one another. When Ramon expresses his desire for her, Teresa becomes sullenly coquettish, defiantly hurling another of his previous embittered accusations back at him with each advance he makes.

In their culminating exchange, which begins in a cafeteria and ends, pointedly, in front of a bridal shop, Teresa claims the right to be as unforgiving of his infidelity as he would be of hers. She has to ask three times what he would do if the tables were turned; from his obtuse point of view, she seems to be positing the inconceivable. Echoing the dual morality espoused earlier by Teresa's cousin, her mother and his own, Tomas insists, "It is not the same. Things are different for a man. It is never the same." Teresa repeats his phrase, transforming it into a question, before turning on her heel and walking out of the cafeteria. Increasingly alarmed as the import of her suggestion begins to dawn on him, Ramon chases her down the street and, in front of mannequins in wedding gowns, demands, "Tell me the truth! What have you done, Teresa?" In one final repetition, she reminds him firmly before she disappears into the crowd, "Remember, it's not the same." The tables are turned on the level of discourse as well as social convention. Language here seems to be acting as a metaphor for exchange and reversal, a justification for equality and reciprocity.

The foregoing arguments suggest that the sexual ideology expressed in *Portrait of Teresa* is a two-edged sword or—"tailoring" the metaphor to the symbol-system of the film—a needle with an eye on each end. Explicitly and implicitly, *Portrait of Teresa* exposes all the contradictions of sexual politics in contemporary Cuba, including the potential inadequacy of "an eye for an eye" as a strategy for righting traditional imbalances between the sexes.

Judging from an admittedly infinitesimal sample, US males who see this film "fall in love" with Teresa, fantasizing themselves potential helpmates in contrast to her insensitive husband. Needless to say, the female spectator finds no analogue for erotic identification. Actor Adolfo Llaurado (who plays Ramon) has been repeatedly cast—in

films like *The Other Francisco* and Part III of *Lucia*—as both obtuse and brutal, In many ways, from a Cuban point of view, his role in *Portrait of Teresa* is his most sympathetic. It is perhaps an index of cultural divergence that American audiences tend to see him in this role as an unmitigated "bad guy." Tomás, Teresa's possible lover, is the least developed of the film's major characters.

Given these characterizations, *Portrait of Teresa* conforms to the classic pattern which permeates Western visual culture from Renaissance painting to contemporary advertising and even pornography: the erotic identification of the male spectator is facilitated by the mode of presentation of the female protagonist and further enhanced by the comparative unworthiness of her mate or suitor. In this sense, reconsidering the connotations of the film's title, *Portrait of Teresa* is both a portrayal of a relationship in dissolution and a "portrait" of a particular and yet also intentionally "typical" woman (in the Marxian sense) which replicates traditional appeals to the appropriative instincts of an implicit male spectator at least as much as it challenges them. Yet this implicit complicity with a male spectator is probably less obvious and more constructive in the Cuban context. It can, in fact, be viewed as a subtle form of subversion of sexist attitudes, since on the terms established by the film, an erotic identification with Teresa entails both an acceptance of her candid deglamorization and a concomitant rejection of those prized masculine traits to which Ramon—a "progressive" man by Cuban standards—so tenaciously clings.

The ending of the film also strikes a potentially subversive chord, in the context of sexual politics in Cuba. It offers an inspiring confirmation—*not* of the centrality of *la problematica de la pareja*—but of one woman's need and determination to make it on her own. Her final resolve and newfound independence constitute a strong statement in the context of contemporary Cuban sexual politics—a statement which is only slightly undercut by our uncertainty as to whether or not she has already constituted herself as part of another couple. Given the massive strides made in Cuba over the past decade around issues of sexual equality in private as well as public life (and this film is, for all its veiled contradictions, admirable testimony to that irreversible progress) we may soon be spared from having to ask that age-old question: Does she or doesn't she? —JULIANNE BURTON

NOTES

1. John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*. London: BBC and Penguin Books, 1972, pp. 45-64.
2. The word "portrait" is extremely rare in film titles: a survey of several reference works turned up a half dozen.
3. Among the best known: *Men of the Cane Fields* (1965), *The Song of the Tourist* (1967), *Viva la Republica* (1972), *Panama: The Fifth Frontier* (1974). The medium-length *De la guerra americana (Of the American War. 1969)* is an early attempt at fictional film-making.
4. B. Ruby Rich, *"Portrait of Teresa," Jump/Cut* No. 2 (May, 1980.)
5. See Patricia Peyton and Carlos Broullon, *Portrait of Teresa:* An Interview with Pastor Vega and Daisy Granados," *Cineaste,* Winter, 1979-80, p. 24, and Carlos Galiano, *Retrato de Teresa:* "Hacer por medio de la ficcion un reportaje de la vida actual en nuestra sociedad,' " *Granma* (Havana) July 24, 1979.
6. The absence of any reference to an organized women's movement is striking, since one of the major concerns of the 20-year-old Federacion de Mujeres Cubanas (FMC) has been to bring women into the workforce and help them cope with the problems that arise from their full "integration" into society.
7. According to Vega, ". . . If we'd made it definite that she'd had an affair, [Cuban] viewers would simply have said she deserved what she got. They're still too attached to traditional attitudes when it comes to extramarital sex. And we wanted people to hear *all* of what Teresa says, not just what she says about sex." (Taken from background sheet on *Portrait of Teresa,* distributed by Unifilm.)
8. In "Visual Style and Historical Portrayal in *Lucia,*" *Jump/Cut,* December, 1978, p. 21, John Mraz describes this "formal resonance" as the outstanding (and unifying) innovation of Cuban film.

LUDWIG: REQUIEM FOR A VIRGIN KING

Director: Hans-Jurgen Syberberg. Camera: Dietrich Lohmann. Zweite Deutsche Fernsehen. Zoetrope.

Hans-Jürgen Syberberg's 1972 *Ludwig: Requiem for a Virgin King* (which only recently premiered in New York) is, most immediately, a brilliantly realized study of the bizarre Bavarian monarch, the haunted Wagnerophile castle-builder of the late nineteenth century. Syberberg throws himself boldly into the controversy surrounding Ludwig's "madness" and "suicide," portraying the plot against the king to take away his crown as little more than a blatant grab for power. He thus most

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often presents Ludwig as a silly, rather pitiable figure more sinned against than sinning. Yet his sentiments are ambivalent, and Ludwig is occasionally depicted as the mawkishly Romantic buffoon he also was, slavering at the feet of the proto-Nazi, anti-Semitic Richard Wagner in the service of Art. One very powerful feature of Syberberg's skill is precisely his ability to modulate tonal nuances so subtly that it is often difficult to tell just where his sympathies lie.

Perhaps more important than its status as investigation of the conspiracy against Ludwig, however, is its usefulness as a more humanly scaled (140 minutes) path of entry into Syberberg's later magnificent 7½ hour ordeal known as *Our Hitler: A Film from Germany,* which toured major American cities last year. (Both films are distributed by Francis Ford Coppola's San Francisco-based Zoetrope Studio). Indeed, Syberberg considers them the first and third parts of a trilogy which is completed by a film not yet released in this country called *Karl May: In Search of Paradise Lost* (1974), a study of Hitler's favorite novelist, a turn-of-the-century writer of wholly imaginary "Westerns" virtually unknown in America. In any case, for all his excess, Ludwig is finally a smaller subject than Hitler, and Syberberg's treatment of him is more "restrained" (if that adjective can be applied to any of his work), and thus perhaps more accessible.

The films are related thematically, especially in Syberberg's insistence on probing the wounds of the German psyche to the dismay of many of his countrymen who would like to put the guilty past behind them. As he makes clear in *Our Hitler,* the Führer was not a historical aberration but rather the inevitable result of the darker side of German culture that found its perfect expression in the pan-German chauvinist Wagner and the superheated *Sturm and Drang* Romanticism of his music. The composer thus emerges as villain in both films: in *Our Hitler,* the Führer is shown orating in a toga as he stands in Wagner's open grave, while in *Ludwig,* the composer is alternately portrayed as a hermaphroditic black-clad angel of death and a somersaulting semi-retarded dwarf. *Ludwig* is, in fact, cast in the form of a parody of Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen,* opening with three whorish, past-their-prime Rhinemaidens and punctuated throughout by soulful renderings of the Ring cycle's better-known arias, which, in this context, manage to sound both beautiful and grotesque at the same time. That particularly Teutonic brand of decadence known as *Liebestod* (love-death), which was so mightily to attract and repel Thomas Mann in *The Magic Mountain,* reached its zenith in the famous duet from *Tristan and Isolde,* Wagner's greatest opera.

Another of Syberberg's targets in both films is, baldly and thus reductively stated, the utter venality of present-day society. Thus, in *Our Hitler* he points an accusatory finger at the well-fed Bavarian burghers who open a Hitler museum and produce Hitler "souvenirs" for fun and profit, whereas in *Ludwig* he juxtaposes images of the intensely suffering king with home-movie footage of the hordes of American tourists tromping through his outlandish castles, Instamatics clicking all the while. We learn along the way that in spite of the immense costs incurred in the building of these wedding-cake fantasies (which provided his enemies "proof" of his insanity), over the years they have more than paid for themselves at the tourist ticket window. In both cases, we are left amazed at the power of bourgeois society to domesticate and normalize the greatest horrors and most private suffering in the interest of profit.

The curse of the Norns ▶

The truly exciting aspect of Syberberg's films, however, is that his overt historical and political themes merge effortlessly with his "formal themes" concerning the nature of film, art, and even perception itself. Naturally, the film is thoroughly self-reflexive and utterly opposed to the illusionistic dramatizing of conventional narrative films. In the program notes, Syberberg calls the film "a declaration of war against the present forms of cinema dialogue and of 'boulevard' type cinema in the tradition of Hollywood and its satellites, . . . against psychological chitchat, against the action film, against a particular philosophy endlessly linking shots and reverse shots, against the metaphysics of the automobile and the gun, against the excitement of open and closed doors, against the melodrama of crime and sex. . . ." Given this posture, some will undoubtedly find the film boring, but it is so in the way that Bresson is boring, or Godard, or any director who has tried to stretch the narrowly dictated boundaries of cinematic narrative.

Very early we are introduced to a startlingly effective juxtaposition which sets the tone for everything that comes after. In this shot, Ludwig, as a five-year-old boy, walks trance-like toward the camera past the Rhinemaidens—but he is already wearing the moustache and goatee of his later years. This blatantly artificial yet moving image is among the most haunting in the film and is repeated at the end. Throughout, the accent remains on the stylized, the theatrical: thus the entire film, like *Our Hitler,* takes place on a stage filled with props and people who exist on an equal footing. Behind the stage—which insists on its staginess and makes no concession to any Barthesian *effet de réel*—stands the gigantic screen for rear projection which Syberberg was later to use so imaginatively in *Our Hitler.* Its principal effect is that of most modern painting: to emphasize the flatness of the image, to prevent any easy recourse to Renaissance perspectival illusionism and, by extension, the proverbial willing suspension of disbelief demanded by conventional narrative. In *Ludwig,* it must be admitted, Syberberg is only feeling out the technique, and more often than not it is used rather statically, with slide after slide of the lushly kitsch interiors of Ludwig's castles alternating with steamy Romantic notions of exotic "Oriental" sets. Only once, in fact, does he project a piece of film on the screen, the very powerful clip of the American tourists mentioned earlier.

Throughout the film, Syberberg playfully pretends to take pains to establish a "realism" which he simultaneously exposes for the artifice it always is. So, for example, in the midst of a fully believable dramatic scene between Ludwig I (the grandfather of the film's subject) and one of his advisors, Syberberg has the former king attribute a quotation about the importance of art to Brecht, even though the scene is ostensibly taking place 20 years before the playwright's birth. (The irony is compounded, of course, by invoking the name of the inventor of the famous *Verfremdungseffekt* that Syberberg is so effectively making use of here).

Syberberg gives full vent to "creative anachronism" and the alienation effect in an astonishing dream sequence that occurs about midway through the film. Various heroes of German history are introduced, accompanied by sound tracks from American pop culture sources which identify them with the Lone Ranger, Tarzan, and Superman, complexly echoing Wim Wenders's notion that the Americans have colonized the German mind, while at the same time deflating the Germanic reverence for the heroic. The mockery is intensified when the sound tracks are speeded up, resulting in chipmunky renditions of the familiar "Hi ho, Silver!" and "Who knows what evil lurks in the heart of man?" Ludwig's dream grows ever more bizarre as these Teutonic heroes career about on bicycles on the same stage as dark Fellini-esque motorcyclists and a comic Hitler who does a provocative tango with Ludwig's hairdresser, now dressed up as Ernst Röhm, the homosexual head of the Führer's private army. As such, the dream comes to have a more universalized significance as the neurotic collective unconscious of the entire German people, past, present, and future.

The Brechtian devices are clearly central to Syberberg's strategy in the film, for without them, he seems to be saying, a director could easily succumb to the temptations of a romanticized treatment the material so richly calls for, and which Visconti, for one, yielded to in his version. The other reason is that this film, like *Our Hitler,* is less about its ostensible subject than about itself. As such, it strongly implies that uncomplicated access to the past is an impossibility and that art is at best a highly problematic approach to the

darkness that is history.

Yet in spite of the preponderance of Brechtian alienation, the film *is* dramatic finally, even in the conventional sense, through the sheer power of the actors, especially Harry Baer in the title role, to create and project characters out of nothing, in the face of the stiffest opposition. We end up caring for Ludwig very much. Perhaps this represents Syberberg's acquiescence in the ultimate defeat of the Brechtian model in the face of the intransigence of human emotion and identification, or perhaps it comes about against his will. I tend to think that Syberberg knows perfectly well what he is doing, and in fact has created a promising new variation on "traditional" Brechtian aesthetics, that may very well serve to revitalize and bring it up to date. At the very least, his films are the most imaginative encounter between the theatrical and the cinematic in the history of either medium.

—PETER BRUNETTE

THE DANCING SOUL OF THE WALKING PEOPLE

A film by Paula Gladstone. Distribution: P.O. Box 9066, Berkeley, CA 94709.

Coney Island, New York: "It's a hurdy-gurdy kind of a place," in summer, a parade of sweltering, half-clothed bodies, city-pale and city-black; in winter, an icy haven for loners seeking the company of other loners. A playground. A (last) resort on the edge of New York City. But Coney Island is also a community, and for film-maker Paula Gladstone, it is home. Gladstone, who now lives in the San Francisco Bay Area, returned to the place where she was born and raised to make *The Dancing Soul of the Walking People*, an impressive journey through three seasons of changing light, population, movement and mood at Coney Island.

Though the main impetus of *The Dancing Soul* . . . is a poetic play with light and the (still!) fascinating potentials for black-and-white film-making, the images Gladstone chooses are obviously inspired by her own investment in Coney Island as a unique locality, and one of the more interesting aspects of the film is the subtle and imaginative way in which Gladstone sparks a "sociological" interest in the place. Gladstone concentrates on the area under the boardwalk, where bars of light passing through the slats and onto the sand are shot against the eerie backdrop created by the receding perspective of the promenade above. The walking people are many and varied. They move into the light and disappear; a child throws sand into the rays in a quiet trance; a body-builder works alone in the snow. The Coney Island most of us associate with the name—of rides and games and Nathan's hot dogs —is never the subject of Gladstone's camera, but something of its "soul" is always present in her images of life under the boardwalk, just as a film shot only in New York's subways would surely capture an essence of the street-life above. *The Dancing Soul of the Walking People* is an underground film: an abstracted, underworld, inner-world poetic documentary on life on the fringes of New York.

Gladstone shot the film silent, then added a sound track which includes jazz by Duke Ellington, Anthony Braxton and Alice Coltrane. The latter's high pitched, wordless sounds, with their eerie (atonal) suggestion of romantic longing, are particularly effective—first moving, then disturbing—when set against the silent images of people drifting, gazing into the camera and wandering off. Other sounds—horses' hooves, footsteps, shots from a shooting gallery, as well as the music (none of it "easy listening")—are painstakingly integrated to add humor, or suspense, or irony, or awe to the particular images. The viewer is effectively prevented from being lulled by the often beautiful, often slow-paced pictorial flow. When gun shots sputter out "at" the figures passing in front of the still camera, Gladstone is probably suggesting, ironically, something about the relationship between photographer and subject—an unspoken pun on the idea of a shooting gallery that carries implications about her role as artist in the specific context of this film.

Gladstone's own poems, gritty, immediate and sexual, are, as read by the poet, as musical in their way as are the other elements of the sound track: "mmmmmmmmmmmm/sweet tar lady/ come on over here/come on over . . . lemme swing you side to side/just remember baby there ain't no standin up when you're on this ride . . . mmmmm mmmmmmmm/sweet tar lady . . . augh come on over here sweet tar lady/come on over/for only fifty cents/I'll tunnel of love you from behind."

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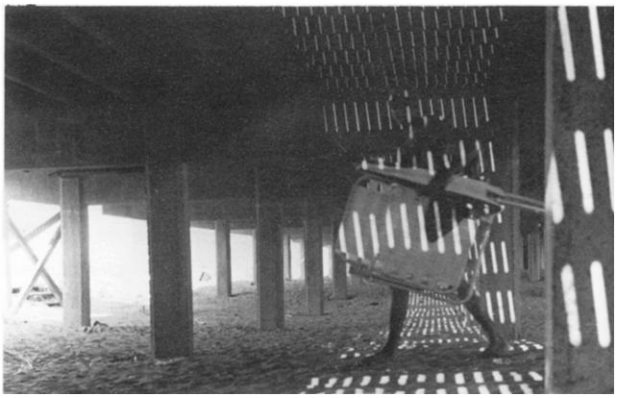
The main text of *The Dancing Soul . . .* , however, is a painterly study of the effects of natural light on objects: how it highlights, how it mutates, how it makes objects invisible and becomes, to the eye, a kind of object itself. That the film is divided into three seasons is made evident in the radically changing angles of light through the slats of the boardwalk. Gladstone works with textures as well: the high reflectivity of both sand and snow accounts for the strange effect of many of the images, and one is slow to realize in the third segment that it is in fact snow, not sand, creating this play, new to the film, with the winter light.

By shifting her camera position and, essentially, her camera "involvement," Gladstone creates changes of rhythm and of mood. Often the camera is placed at a central perspective point under the boardwalk to record the parade: whole (extended) families crossing under the promenade in search of a beach spot; people on their way to buy food (Gladstone plays with the ellipses of real-time photography when we see the same boy cross the frame and then return with his hot-dog and drink); people just milling about in the shade on a summer's day. In fall, this same spot under the boardwalk is used by kids and coaches for sports training, and in winter, an old couple sit bundled up, silent; an isolated man lurks and disappears behind a post; two teenage boys play a wacky game of figure-8's around the boardwalk pillars. Throughout all this, the camera is immobile, catching the bizarre, the beautiful, the humdrum as they pass by. Then there are times when the movement of the light is picked up by the movement of Gladstone's camera, and her mood appears ecstatic, if not frenetic. When the light is splayed by the wood, creating a seemingly endless row of bright lines, the camera "plays" the lines like a harp, and harp music is heard on the sound track. Later, a fast pan of the beach makes for a dizzying moment of blindness, and what was joy becomes jarring speed (disturbing, perhaps, because we are not sure why the film has taken this sudden turn toward chaos).

These elements—lighting, camera movement, angles—are, of course, what fascinate all filmmakers. In narrative films, they provide the subtext (and in some play a greater subtextual role than others—*film noir,* for example, makes extensive use of selfconscious patterns of light and shadow). The elements which make up the subtext of traditional cinema are the text of Gladstone's abstract work. And this abstraction on the traditional is something that Gladstone plays with in many ways. Her film could be called a *film blanc,* its use of sunlight matching the *noir*'s use of shadow, its mood so much the daytime, seaside equivalent of the *noir*'s urban light. Similarly, as I have indicated, her sound track functions more as an abstract, wordless "dialogue" than as background accompaniment. And there is a potential subtext to Gladstone's film, as well, something "thematic" and very close to what might comprise the text of a narrative film. It is to be found by "reading" the pattern of light on the objects onto which it falls, and for this reason it remains "potential": i.e., in the eye of the beholder.

Reading the film thus, it speaks (to this viewer) of the function of Coney Island as a place of escape from New York City, and from this reading emerge ideas of a subtly political and philosophical nature. When the people walk into the bars of light, they are at times trapped in them, framed by them, and immobilized. At other times, their bodies, or parts of their bodies, disappear into the light. And at all times, they are framed by a certain suggestion of infinity created by the perspective achieved by the camera's placement under the boardwalk, a perspective which indicates that it continues beyond what the eye can see. Framed, or blessed, depending on how one looks at it, and Gladstone seems to present it both ways: freedom-into-light, versus death. In any case, the figure disappears.

In another abstraction on the narrative film, Gladstone's *Dancing Soul . . .* is a clever, small-scale stylistic update on what used to be called the "woman's film" (when men made them). That the film was made by a woman is evident not from its



Figures disappearing into light ▶

prevailing sensibilities, but from a direct "narrative" camera statement: throughout the film, Gladstone shoots her own feet, in an array of different shoes. The viewer is thus made aware of the film-maker as a character in her own film, and the movement of her feet—sometimes walking, sometimes running—suggests different moods or perhaps even different experiences of the film-maker while working (why, for instance, is she running? dancing? not moving?). Shoes are obviously a major symbol to Gladstone—several still-life shots of empty ballet shoes on the sand make this evident, if it weren't already—and it seems somehow fitting to a woman's film, when one thinks of other films about women in which shoes are made symbolic of their spirit. (But in Gladstone's abstract language, there are only the shoes, not the woman!). When the boardwalk is finally seen from above, it is as the film-maker is shooting her own feet walking. Like Sadie Thompson in Milestone's *Rain*, Paula Gladstone enters the world foot first. One thinks also of Dorothy dancing toward Oz in another "shoe" film, and of the marginal characters she meets; her wide-eyed and open-armed interest in them; her love. Gladstone too meets with a host of unique characters: a young man who dances for her camera; the hard-working muscle-man; a family of deaf-mutes sitting in a circle, in an extraordinarily beautiful shot (in which, typically of Gladstone's ambiguity of image, we wonder: are they playing? sewing? singing? no, "talking"!); and a group of winter swimmers, the Polar Bear Club, who dance for the camera in a haunting winter sequence, and also sing an original song for the film-maker. But shots of isolated men in winter and fall sequences suggest that not all of Gladstone's subjects are playing along with her game. One realizes that Coney Island attracts the city loner and, in addition to imbuing the film with certain city-sociological reverberations, this reminds one of a definite danger to the woman film-maker. So, as film-maker and protagonist of *The Dancing Soul* . . . , Gladstone functions as both Sadie Thompson and Dorothy—as an aggressive manipulator as well as a lover-of-people; as a working woman as well as a dancer-with-images.

There is a unity to *The Dancing Soul* . . . that derives in large part from the fact that Gladstone makes no attempt to hide her role as film-maker,

Subjects and film-maker playing with light

nor the artifice involved. Rather, she emphasizes the relationship between herself as artist and the people she is filming. The result is a work that is intensely personal, abstract, symbolic and artistic, yet also a vital documentary of this unusual place. One can, moreover, imagine the film being comprehended, perhaps best, by the people of Coney Island, for the mood created by Gladstone's sounds and images—a mixture of torpor and activity, of relaxation and escape, of playfulness and longing —seems to be a mood acknowledged by the people in the film as they communicate with the camera, and not simply one imposed by the artist for the sake of communicating her fantasy. The song composed and sung by the aging but hearty women of the Polar Bear Club echoes in its way the bittersweet calling of Gladstone's poem (the "come on over here . . . I know you wanna go for a ride . . . come on over/and I'll show you some heavy skin jive"), substituting a more romantic image for the sexual one. The song, sung slowly and somewhat off-key, not sadly but with a certain awkwardness that sounds like measured dispassion, goes: "Come with me to Coney Island/The sun is heavenly/and the sea is heaven to me/ . . . with all this happiness/there should be love, -ove, -ove . . . The day is young/ (and so are we)/ Dreams come true in Coney Island/ and yours could all come true/ if you would take a swim with us." With all this happiness there should be love: an acknowledged fantasy, but a calling to which, one feels watching Gladstone's film, there will be a response as long as there is a Coney Island. —JUDITH BLOCH

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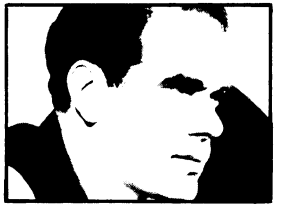

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